

For Reference

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM

For Reference

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM

Ex LIBRIS
UNIVERSITATIS
ALBERTAENSIS





Thesis
1969/70
203

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE WOMEN IN THE NOVELS OF FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

by



ELLIOTT CHRISTOPHER RIDEOUT

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1969

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance a thesis entitled "The Women in the Novels of Frederick Philip Grove" submitted by Elliott Christopher Rideout in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincerest thanks to my wife, Lee, whose support and encouragement enabled me to find a beginning.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2020 with funding from
University of Alberta Libraries

<https://archive.org/details/Rideout1969>

ABSTRACT

During his writing career Frederick Philip Grove was responsible for eight novels, a small work of descriptive narrative, two volumes of essays, an extensive autobiography and several articles. In addition to this, there are unpublished works in manuscript form at present in the foldings of the University of Manitoba.

The critical response to Grove's work has not always been one of unconditional approbation, and Grove himself remarked upon the singularly desolate critical landscape in Canada. What criticism there has been is weak and lacks particular focus. The most common approach being to study the man concurrently with his work.

This thesis attempts to uncover a unifying thread in several novels in order to arrive at a conception of Grove different from what has been concluded in the past. By focussing upon the women characters, we are able to observe and study the works from within and at the same time avoid sacrificing any aesthetic appreciation of the literature.

The thesis is divided into three classifications -- The Wife and Mother, The Mistress, and Daughters and the Second Generation -- which are not necessarily Grove's classifications. Within each chapter there is also an attempt to relate the women to the other characters, and to the rationale of the work in general. The conclusion

draws together the predominant theme in the thesis and also includes a consideration of contemporary criticism.

Due to restrictions in scope there is little attempt to place the literature of Grove into the framework of Canadian literature as a whole, depending instead on close analysis of the actual works and the characters therein.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: <u>The Wife</u>	5
CHAPTER TWO: <u>The Mistress</u>	33
CHAPTER THREE: <u>Daughters and the Second Generation</u> .	75
CONCLUSION	93
FOOTNOTES	100
BIBLIOGRAPHY	102

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

<u>ISM</u>	<u>In Search of Myself</u>
<u>SM</u>	<u>Settlers of the Marsh</u>
<u>FE</u>	<u>Fruits of the Earth</u>
<u>ODB</u>	<u>Our Daily Bread</u>
<u>MM</u>	<u>The Master of the Mill</u>
<u>TG</u>	<u>Two Generations</u>
<u>YL</u>	<u>The Yoke of Life</u>
<u>OPT</u>	<u>Over Prairie Trails</u>

INTRODUCTION

Frederick Philip Grove as a writer is not only concerned with conveying a total image to the reading public. He is more involved in representing a landscape for his own satisfaction, and purely for the sake of doing it. He tries to clarify a particular landscape -- to sort out its inconsistencies. He tries to discover the bonds that tie individuals to a landscape. Grove also examines individuals for their own sake, and does not attempt to transform them into idealized creatures that conform to his idea of the landscape. In this complex role the writer must perpetually deal with the manifold illogicalities of the landscape, and in the end bring forth a work of art. The manner in which he interprets and conceptualizes the landscape is the core of his art; and if he is successful he will arrive at a blending of his own landscape the one before him. The two will become one, and the one will be touched with reality.

Grove's synthesis of his own inner landscape and the external landscape of the women characters will form the basis of this thesis. The women characters will form the basis of this thesis. The women characters are a highly particularized part of that landscape but are not discrete functions. Grove's cultivated sensibilities and experience with women during his youth add in no small way to his overall perception of the Canadian woman. It is true that Grove

does have difficulty in coming to terms with the "newefangle-
ness" of the frontier way of life, but in general his
ability to perceive clearly is not hindered.

I stated earlier that the landscape includes by
definition the inhabitants. I should like to single out
a very particular group of the inhabitants for close
examination. This group is comprised of the women in the
novels of Frederick Philip Grove. Women form the keystone
to a good interpretation of Grove's prairie works and, in
most cases, are the cohesive bonds that hold the narrative
framework together. In addition, an examination of the
women naturally implies at least an oblique examination
of the men in the novels and by so doing provides another
aspect of the works. It is not always a simple matter to
differentiate between the fictional female characters in
the novels and real ideas on women that Grove held himself.
This is mainly because of his autobiography¹ wherein he
is explicit on his own feelings towards women. Often these
supposedly honest personal accounts cloud what might other-
wise be a clear interpretation of women characters in his
writing. Past criticism would seem to indicate that all
his fictional women are products of his own particular
biases but Grove the novelist is not that transparent or
superficial. There are instances where a certain individual
seems to spring entirely from Grove's prejudices, but

usually the treatment is such that the character assumes a reality that does not fit in with the mainstream of the novel. In other words, Grove's narration intrudes so obviously that to ascribe the thoughts expressed to the character would be folly.

To discriminate further between Grove and his characters I will call attention to his use of "editorial comment". This technique enables the narrator to interpose himself into the flow of the novel and comment upon what is taking place. This is not to be confused with the characters, neither is it to be confused with the author, although in many cases it would seem to be the latter. In the majority of his novels Grove supplies a character whose sole occupation is to editorialize, and I shall deal with these individuals as they arise.

I begin this thesis with a look at the early prairie novels and the women to be found in them. To the uninitiated the term "prairie woman" might conceivably convey an image of a rough, eternally-labouring, somewhat bovine individual. Grove effectively destroys that image, and replaces it with a spectrum of images illustrating the various degrees and qualities of the prairie woman. It is true that in Settlers of the Marsh² and Fruits of the Earth³ we find the self-sacrificing farm wife, and we find also the infamous town whore. Grove takes these images further however, and

illustrates that there is more to an individual character than meets the eye. That there is, in fact, more to being a farm wife than working in the fields from dawn to dark. He also deals extensively with the conflict of women who must be wives and mothers both, and still retain some sense of themselves. He deals with passion in all its forms as he finds it on the prairie in perhaps its most violent form. And finally he looks at the second generation of women as they exist and as they will probably exist in the future.

For the purposes of this thesis, I have grouped women into three main classifications: the wife, the mistress, and the daughter. The last chapter also looks at the second generation phenomenon in general.

CHAPTER ONE: Wife and Mother

For the most part, the women characters in the novels of Frederick Philip Grove do not have a unique psychological identity. They are seen either through the eyes of their husbands or lovers, or through the narrator's eyes. This is not to say that the women never are allowed to express themselves as individuals for they are. But more often their emotions are translated by the narrator, or else interpreted by some character closely related to them. This technique has a twofold result: the women to whom this applies are objectified and set at a distance; and secondly, they become more easily controllable as characters.

There are notable exceptions to this, especially in the case of Ruth Spalding and Martha Elliot -- two women who speak with clear voices throughout the two novels.

The objectifying phenomenon is especially useful in terms of perspective. By setting a particular character at a distance, the author may encourage several perspectives -- his own, those of the other characters, and those of the audience. By continuing this technique, the author creates his characters in such a way as to make them almost functions of those three values. When some individual characteristics are added to the collage, what we find is a truly complete, but very economical character. One of the first examples of this technique is to be found in the

novel Settlers of the Marsh, in the character of Mrs. Lund.

For introduction, Grove depends upon a description of physical appearance as being the most salient feature of an individual, and also one which forms the basis for most first impressions. Having been raised in a family whose physical presence was imposing, Grove has a wealth of background to draw upon for such descriptions.

Grove's giants, both male and female, are symbols of struggle. They are pitted against Nature in an almost primitive battle for survival. They must be a physical match for such an enormous adversary and so Grove has drawn them large. Quite often, however, the size of a character becomes repulsive as the character matures, but one must differentiate between repulsion on the part of Grove, and repulsion on the part of other characters.

For example, Niels sees Mrs. Lund as

. . . a big, fleshy woman of florid features who must have been attractive in the past. She was lively, in a coarse, good-humoured way, not without wit . . . (SM, 28)

and a little later the narrator (for the insight is too sophisticated) speaks of her in the following terms:

. . . she seemed to live under a strain, as if she kept her spirits up in an eternal fight against adverse circumstances. Her predominance was a physical one, gained by sheer weight and dimensions and held by sonorous contralto and booming ring of the voice. (SM, 35-36)

It is not by intellectual dominance that Mrs. Lund maintains herself in the fight for survival, but by physical force.

Mrs. Lund is in no way an intensely introspective individual and because of this she endures throughout the crises in the novel maintaining a steady fortress of security for both her own family and Niels.

The vastness of the Canadian landscape is matched, at least in outward sign by the physical size of its inhabitants. But the landscape is lasting, the inhabitants are not. This element of transition, of the ephemeral quality of man, is emphasized over and over again in Grove's characters.

In a more sophisticated novel, Fruits of the Earth,³ (original title, Chronicles of Spalding District) the major characters are all physically outstanding. The idea of physical grossness in the case of women is much more pronounced in Fruits than in Settlers. Ruth Spalding is carefully drawn in an increasingly specific manner. She enters into the novel as a mere reference, and by the end of the work has emerged not so much as an individual person, but more of a force, an influence. In fact, Grove purposely omits any explicit description of Ruth until after he has given us complete pictures of Abe, his sister Mary, and Mary's husband, Charles. Grove places Abe's description first. He is described as extraordinarily tall, six-feet four inches in height. He was "broad-shouldered and deep-chested" (FE, 19) and in temperament he reflected his

proportions, being "impulsive, bearing down obstacles by sheer impetuosity". (FE,19) His sister Mary "was tall, even somewhat large and heavy." (FE,20) Where the men are large, imposing and powerful, the women become "heavy", often "stout". The women seem to be more of the earth on which they stand than do the men. The size of the women limits them, where it expands the scope of the men, makes them cumbersome and awkward where it makes the men awesome, graceful.

But this is not to say that Grove is mired in this one vision, because he also includes small individuals in his setting. Mary's husband Charles, next to Abe, is physically a very insignificant individual.

. . . the doctor was almost correspondingly small, for he lacked an exact twelve inches of Abe's stature . . . the doctor was slender, and fine-limbed, and yet he stopped . . . (FE, 19)

and even more minutely,

If the doctor's whole physique was small, his face was diminutive. It looked contracted, as if its owner lived in a perpetual concentration of thought. . . He had his right foot drawn up on his left knee and, with his free hand, was nursing his ankle. (FE, 19)

This last, the minute detail of the doctor's habit of sitting, is repeated throughout the entire work, and works a subtle magic on the reader. It is the affectation, or perhaps becomes the affectation, of a small man.

The interesting quality of Fruits of the Earth is the

dichotomy between that which is static and that which is in flux. Perhaps an even better word than flux would be metamorphosis. Because where Abe and Mary, and even Abe's neighbour Nicoll, remain physically the same, (and Charles is consistent throughout) Ruth does not. She is presented to us as a large woman, and she grows larger and more ungainly with the passage of time. Only certain characters in Grove's novels do this. Mrs. Elliot in Our Daily Bread⁴ becomes increasingly gross as her malignancy spreads throughout her body and soul whereas Samuel Clark becomes more and more maigre in The Master of the Mill. Ruth Spalding in Fruits of the Earth is one woman whose physical size becomes almost a narrative obsession. The narrator must continually search for new ways to describe her enormous bulk. It is here that we find one of the rare instances where a woman character is allowed a consciousness of her own. This voice combines with the voice of her husband Abe, and the omnipresent voice of the narrator to achieve a peculiar tri-level hierarchy of perspectives.

For example, Abe sees his wife through his own eyes:

Ruth, in a long, dark print dress, was standing in the door, a smile on her pretty face and a child a few months old in her arms. She was not exactly small; but she was getting plump; and the plumper she grew the less tall she seemed. (FE, 30)

It seemed as if Abe is ascribing a value to physical appearance. She is at first "plump", itself a mildly flattering

adjective, but the plumpness makes her seem shorter.

Shortly after this scene, Ruth speaks about herself and as she sees herself through Abe's eyes.

She was aware that Abe had begun to look critically at her. She had caught herself wishing that she could make herself invisible; she was getting stout. Not that Abe said a word about it; but she knew he disliked stout women. (FE, 46)

Ruth thinks of herself as shapeless, and we cannot help but think that her shapelessness is one of soul as well as body. She becomes more and more careless in her house-keeping, and in her personal grooming.

We have seen Ruth from two of the three perspectives and it remains only to discover that perspective used by the narrator. He describes her in an oblique fashion by alluding to her slender shape at the time of her marriage and also by concluding things of concern to Ruth and Abe that neither of them would have had the astuteness to do. The narrator points out that Ruth's lassitude is a result of her resentment of her husband, and the lack of any real function for her to perform. The narrator for the most part in this novel knows more about each character than the character knows about himself.

It is not yet fully evident to what end Grove utilizes his peculiar tendency of repeated physical description, but considerably more light is shed on the matter during the episode involving Abe's massive coup in the harvest of 1912.

Abe gambles dangerously on that most capricious mistress to whom the farmer is irrevocably bound -- the weather. He decides to stack his grain early, rather than thresh it in the fields. He gambles successfully and by doing so harvests the largest and most lucrative crop in the history of the district. Thus at fifty years of age he achieves even beyond his own dreams of Empire. He has wrestled with the elements, with the land, and with his fellow men, and he has emerged the victor. But what of the spoils? The temporal world, comes sucking in around his ankles once again with an undeniable vigour. Ruth becomes, to Abe, an example of the passage of time.

Abe had been dimly aware of changes going on about him. The years were piling up. He had given it no thought; it could not be helped. Slow work, the work of the farm! Every step took a year. But the last step had been taken.

Yes, there, in the door of the kitchen, stood Ruth. That was how she looked; not a sight to make a man's glance linger. Between her heavy bust and her wide, massive hips, the last trace of a waistline had vanished. In the short, wide face, the wrinkles furrowing cheeks and forehead showed a thickness of skin such as to preclude any delicacy in the mouldings which increasing years were bound to bring. Her expression betrayed a sense of disappointment with life.
(FE, 110)

Abe stands at the apex of his life. His labour and his dreams have brought him triumph. Ruth stands almost at the nadir of her life, no longer feminine, no longer imbued with the heretofore borrowed sense of vitality, but merely a thing of flesh. Abe sees his wife, possibly for the first time in twenty-five years, and he is filled with

distaste. The gross and defeated creature he sees represents all those things that are diametrically opposed to his own ideals. In the pervading luminence of his dream he has neglected to pay attention to the individuals who would inhabit it. His great home, which he now is able to build, seems ludicrous in the face of his wholly unsuitable partner. Grove's point is inescapable: Abe Spalding has built his Empire not only from the stubborn soil, but also from the physical and spiritual essence of his wife. Abe's dream becomes an inevitable paradox: he will have his idyllic mansion with electric lights in the henhouse, but it will be only a shell to house the shell that is himself, sucked dry from continuous toil; and the ravaged shell that is his wife, herself drained by the task of nurturing that dream. Abe has refused even to broach any subject related to their life, for fear of provoking a "scene" as he calls it. Perhaps too, he is afraid that Ruth's dedication is not as strong as his and, if not, might taint him with weakness. Ruth need only timidly question Abe's motivation to receive her chastisement.

'Abe,' Ruth began once more, trying to be considerate.

'You work and work and work. What for?'

. . . 'What does anyone work for? We work because we must, I suppose. We are all going to die one day if that's what you mean. But before we die, we want to find some satisfaction. . . ' (FE, 111)

She cannot make Abe understand the complications of her

predicament, and the sudden realization of this ushers in a new era in her existence.

Before continuing the examination of Ruth Spalding's hesitant regeneration, lest this become an exclusive treatise on Fruits of the Earth, I should like to turn my attention to Grove's treatment of wives in analogous situations.

Martha Elliot, the matriarch in Our Daily Bread,⁴

She [Martha] had always been plump; but during the last ten years she had grown very stout, excessively so; and she was short of breath. Not often did she leave the farm any longer. Even on the place itself she confined her activities to the front yard and the hen-houses. . . . In both places she sat down on a low stool when she had any work to do; one of her daughters lent her an arm whenever she moved about, in her coming and going. (ODB, 14)

The difference between the two women lies in the fact that Ruth's grossness stems from a malignancy of spirit, while Martha's is caused by a malignancy of body. There is no doubt that Martha Elliot is slowly being ravaged by cancer, so slowly as to be almost imperceptible, save for the sudden outbursts of the disease at ever-shortening intervals.

. . . Mrs. Elliot was failing and plainly preparing to leave earthly scenes. Many times, during the last few years, John Elliot had urged her . . . to let him call in what human knowledge and skill was available; but she, in an unconquerable aversion to physical examination, had invariably declined. Her illness, little defined, mysterious, hovered over the house like a threat, felt by her children no less than by her husband. (ODB, 8)

Grove seems acutely aware of the tiny ironies dealt to us by Fortune. The same ascendencies and descendencies that

were observed between Abe and Ruth Spalding are repeated on a grander scale in Our Daily Bread. Ruth's spirit reached its lowest ebb at that point in time when Abe achieved his highest goals. Martha's malignancy begins to accelerate as her family begins to grow up and away from her, and her influence becomes progressively lessened.

Our Daily Bread, written five years before Fruits of the Earth, seems at times to be an expansion and exploration in detail of the middle years. Our Daily Bread begins in the twilight of the Elliot family. The tender years, the years of struggle have passed, and the hopes have become lesser realities. The Elliot children are straining towards independence, each in his own way, and the parents are vainly attempting to exercise a little weak control. John Elliot Senior has become embittered and not a little paranoiac. Martha, his wife, is slowly dying.

It is in the relationship between John and Martha that I will concentrate, for it is there that the insights not found in Fruits of the Earth will be forthcoming. The key to an understanding of Martha's role lies in the lines quoted earlier, "Her illness . . . hovered over the house like a threat. . ." (ODB, 8) In health, Martha had hovered over her house, and over her husband and children. In death she continues to do the same.

The Elliot household is a matriarchy in the sense that,

although John Elliot is the physical strength, Martha is definitely the power. For unlike Abe Spalding, John Elliot has an immense respect for the womanliness in his wife. She is an almost magical entity, from whom children spring -- a source of life.

He courted and married Martha for her potential motherhood, and for her femininity. John remembers Martha in a warm, tender way:

Yet, till quite lately, she had always remained pleasant; pleasant to look at, in spite of her growing obesity; pleasant to touch; given to the simple pleasures of the table and the flesh. (ODB, 10)

He sees in his wife a more humane individual, with more warmth and freedom than he himself possesses. That she was dying painfully before his eyes was a continuous shock to him, and one that he could never fully comprehend. .
Consciously, John knows that his wife is going to die, but his subconscious mind has not accepted the fact.

Our knowledge of Martha Elliot, and of the other woman characters, comes from an agglomeration of objective facts. In order to discover a true picture of Martha we must piece together a great quantity of information gathered from her conversations with her children and her husband. The most notable of her children is Gladys.

Martha never allowed her husband to visit her for any length of time during the latter stages of her illness.

She was unwilling to let herself be seen in such a helpless state by her husband. But another reason, and a more telling one, she reveals in an indirect way through a conversation with her daughter Gladys.

Mrs. Elliot heaved a sigh of contentment. "I am so glad to have you here!" And, drawing her close, "Gladys, I know it is a sin. I can't help it. The rest . . . they are all my children. But I must tell you. They are strangers.

"I know, Mother. I know. And so, at heart, is Father."

Mrs. Elliot looked frightened. "How can you tell?"

"Never mind, Mother. He's a man," (ODB, 89)

This conversation illustrates that there is a great deal of personality underneath the gross exterior of Martha Elliot. Her physical size is a form of disguise. As gross and repulsive as she is, she still loves her children dearly, is still an individual psychological entity. Since we may safely assume that the portraying of Martha is not gratuitous, we may well ask for the reasons behind such a portrayal.

I believe that even at this early point it is safe to conclude that Grove makes use of physical size as a mirror both for the particular character to see himself in, and also for others to be reflected in. With the character of Mrs. Lund, her size is an indication to the narrator of her endurance. For Niels, her proportions are too powerful and too domineering for him to be comfortable with her -- at least in the beginning before his own

maturation.

Furthermore, the author augments the impact of Martha's death by portraying her as a large and powerful woman. Since the entire length of the narrative which has to do with Martha concerns her slow death and its effect upon the family, the author makes his audience more aware of the incredulity with which John Elliot, for one, reacts to it. Thus, by making full use of a simple technique like physical description, Grove has created a very real, very viable individual.

The narrator describes Martha during one of her last moments, adding insights which even she could not experience. She is faced with the ordeal of seeing her children marry and leave the home, while she herself is disintegrating physically.

During the wedding ceremony she had stood and sat about, ornamental but statuesque, as if things did not concern her.

.
Mrs. Elliot, leaning, . . . appeared for a moment in the door and feebly waved her hand as, with much shouting and laughing, . . . the two democrats got under way. Then without shedding a tear, she turned back into the house and at once climbed upstairs to her room.

So far she "Had kept up a front"; now she gave in to her exhaustion and indifference. (ODB, 110)

In these final scenes prior to Martha's death emphasis is placed upon the apathy and indifference of Nature to the phenomenon of death. The contrast between the struggle against the prairie and the struggle against death is

underscored in these last episodes. In the case of the powerful, determined people that Grove writes about, the irony of that final battle is inescapable. It seems as if in the face of death, Martha has succumbed with a willing indifference.

Mrs. Elliot lay on her back, apathetic and helpless. She scarcely responded to the kiss of her youngest daughter.

 Both daughters felt forsaken, deprived, by the incomprehensible indifference of their mother, of a support which had never yet been lacking. (ODB, 111)

But Grove is not satisfied to allow Martha to slip so easily into death, and the final episode of her life is one worthy of high praise for its sheer unexpectedness and irony.

Martha recovers a semblance of her former vigour following an extensive operation for abdominal cancer and seems to be on the way to a full recovery, when the unexplained happens. She rises up from her bed and demands that Gladys take her to the local Thanksgiving dance. Gladys is far too frightened to disagree.

At the house, her mother was dressing in her best black silk. The dress had not been changed since her illness and was much too wide for her. She stuffed little pillows and other soft things into the bosom to fill the folds of its waist. About her legs it hung loose and uneven.
 (ODB, 129)

Martha vainly tries to replace the outward appearance of life by artificially increasing her size, when all along she has been a huge woman and despondent because of it.

The dance over, Martha returns home to a frantic husband.

Mrs. Elliot was driving. She was smiling, triumphant.

.....
When Mrs. Elliot alighted, with tired, broken movements,
she said defiantly, "For once in my life I have had a
good time!" (ODB, 131)

Her one good time proves to be her last, as the strain of moving about opened her sutures and she sinks rapidly into death. The effect is electric upon both the audience and the other characters in the novel. This last burst of defiance in the face of imminent death is a proud monument to the figure of this woman. It is undoubtedly the final action of a woman who refused to die in bed, and at the same time it is an action calculated to bring on a swifter death. By this means Grove gives a depth to the character of Martha Elliot in much the same way as the closing scenes of Settlers of the Marsh give a depth to the character of Mrs. Lund. Ruth Spalding too has her final moments of individual expression in the face of existence when she vainly tries to persecute the seducer of her daughter Frances.

It is possible that the author is attempting to focus the attention of the reader on the futility and inevitability of life and I believe that this aspect does exist in the narrative. But more, Grove is illustrating that the struggle of existence, not only as exemplified on the prairie, is a struggle that must persist until the very last. The novels begin with the prairie and the tedium

of survival, but end on a more universal scale considering the whole question of individual existence.

At this point, I would like to leave the examination of the prairie novels -- so called -- and turn for the remainder of the chapter to Grove's most structurally intricate work -- The Master of the Mill.⁵ This novel makes use of perspective to an even greater degree than we have seen up to this point. I spoke earlier about the different perspectives used in defining a particular character in the prairie novels -- in this novel the technique is made even more complete by the extensive use of multiple narration. The complexity of the narration is closely tied to the complex chronology involved in The Master of the Mill. As before, the women do not have much of a psychological reality of their own and are defined more in terms of their effect on other characters. Their motivations are described often interpreted by one or another of the narrators. The intricacies arise when one considers that usually the narrator is himself a character in his own narration. The principal narrators are: the old, dying Senator, Samuel Clark; Lady Clark, daughter-in-law of the Senator; Odette Charlebois, housekeeper for the Senator following the death of his wife; and Captain Stevens, a long-time employee of the Mill. These narrators figure highly in the plot of the novel

and thereby have almost a double existence. The final narrator in the novel is omniscient and assumes a vantage point which enables him to see all individuals both as narrators and as characters. His is the eye behind the eyes.

This situation results in an even clearer picture of the women than we found in the earlier works. Because of the virtually unlimited perspectives in use, the final picture of an individual character is more variegated and less monolithic.

The landscape too is changed. This novel is set on the modern industrialized landscape with its aspects of machinery and institutions, man and machine in a new kind of conflict. The characters themselves, and especially the women, are drawn from a new technology, and are mainly inhabitants of a new aristocracy. The class divisions determined by financial wealth are an integral part of this landscape. This is the other half, so to speak, of the Canadian landscape -- the complement in a metaphysical sense -- to the prairie consciousness. On the surface, the motivations, goals and subsequent conflicts of the women on this landscape are different than those of Martha Elliot and Ruth Spalding, but ultimately the essential questions remain the same. Here the question of existence is as pertinent a one as it was in Spalding District, the

spectre of Death no less terrifying to Samuel Clark than to John Elliot.

In the novels set on the prairie the struggle against Nature was the one main informing struggle. In Langholm, ironically, it is the struggle against other individuals that requires one's major effort. Ironical because on the prairie the struggle was against vast uncontrollable forces set loose by Nature, and in Langholm, man has created a machine -- the Mill -- which like Nature unleashes equally powerful though different forces upon its creators. The struggle in The Master of the Mill is primarily a power struggle among men and women to determine who will most benefit from the functioning of the machine. The women in Langholm then seek power over others in their search for individual identity; while the women on the prairie sought power over their own personal existence in the face of a hostile environment.

To return to The Master of the Mill, the problem of the women characters is further complicated by the fact that the three main women all share the same given name -- Maud. Grove purposely named these three essential characters identically in order to contrast their various personalities further.

The first of the Mauds in The Master of the Mill is Maud Carter. Maud Carter becomes Mrs. Samuel Clark, mother

to Ruth and Edmund Clark. It is especially difficult to deal with Mrs. Clark's role as a mother, since Grove does not give us sufficient information on that role, and she dies giving birth to Ruth. But it is in her role as wife that Grove fully explores the matrix of this Maud. Later, in his explication of Lady Clark, wife of Edmund, Grove presents another kind of wife. Like the wives in Settlers of the Marsh, and Fruits of the Earth, the role of Mrs. Clark as wife is by definition secondary to the role her husband plays. Mrs. Clark is first an individual woman, and only when that role is conceded will she consent to being a wife. Samuel Clark acknowledges her potency as an individual on the occasion of their first meeting,

It was on that day, too, that he had met Miss Maud Carter, realizing with a shock that he was not, after all, to be entirely master of his fate . . .

.
At first sight he had felt that Miss Maud Carter concerned him with a fearful immediacy. (MM, 41)

It is precisely this "fearful immediacy" that captivates Samuel Clark: it is, in a word, the very "modern" appeal of Maud Carter. Unlike Ruth Spalding who was eventually content to abstain from active life and concern herself with the perpetuation of her own inherited values, Maud Carter has ambitions. These are first for her husband, then for herself.

[Sam] would have done what his wife wished him to do; he would have gone to Europe and become a dilettante in music,

a collector of paintings and articles of virtu, a patron, perhaps, of the arts; and he would have been happy. Perhaps his wife would have ceased seeing in him a plodding mediocrity, well-meaning, faithful to a trust, but without imagination or creative force. (MM, 52)

This rather distasteful conception of Samuel by his wife is given a great emphasis in Grove's study of the pair. Maud Clark's attitude, in Samuel's own words, is ironic. She never saw her husband as the true master of the mill, but ever as a small boy playing in a world filled with men's magical toys. Only a few short months before her death does she even begin to realize anything about the man to whom she is married. Odette Charlebois, one of the narrators in the novel, remembers Mrs. Clark as looking at everything from an aesthetic point of view. This sensibility precludes any awareness of the mill as machine or its operation. How unlike the male Clarks, for whom the Mill became an aesthetic unto itself. It is unlikely that, until a short time before her death, Mrs. Clark considered herself married to the master of the mill. Her attitude was that she had married only the means to wealth and power. The following excerpt of dialogue will serve to illustrate the point,

"'And did you make up that mind of yours?' She touched his [Sam's] chin with a playful finger, her other hand resting on the cane.

"'I believe its made itself up of its own accord.'

"'Good!' she cried. 'I was afraid we'd have the mill for lunch.' (MM, 76)

The implications inherent in Mrs. Clark's attitude leave no doubt but that she thought her husband weak, and uninspired. Being a taciturn individual, he would never indicate that he was anything to the contrary. Mrs. Clark assumes almost a shrewish role as she mercilessly prods her husband, perhaps in an attempt to anger him, going so far as to suggest publicly an affaire d'amour between Maud Dolittle and himself.

Grove has here, in the character of Mrs. Clark, created a new woman, to complement his vision of the new man. No longer do we find the powerful giants of men as in Fruits of the Earth, or Two Generations,⁶ striding across their vast, fertile domains, pummelling Nature into submission. In Samuel Clark we find a slight man, a man who must stand on his tiptoes to kiss his wife, and one who shuns violence, or confrontation of any kind. This recreated idea of man must demand an equally new idea of women.

It is interesting to note that, in spite of her virtues, Mrs. Clark is yet only one-third of that woman whom Grove sees emerging from the industrialized landscape. It will be necessary to distill the essences from each of: Maud Clark, Maud Dolittle, and Sibyl Carter if we are to arrive at a reasonable image of the new woman. Both Miss Dolittle and Sibyl Carter will appear in a subsequent chapter.

This technique of particularization in terms of

characterization is more or less fully developed in The Master of the Mill. In his earlier prairie novels, the women characters were more whole, even if that "wholeness" were not always desirable. The sublunary female characters in those works, like Olga in Settlers of the Marsh, were more personifications of aspects never discovered by the primary figures of the novel. The minor women characters often represented youthful vitality, or promiscuity. The major figures, although carefully drawn, were too often pale and insubstantial, their vigour waning as their lives progressed.

It would be impossible to speak of the wives in Grove's novels without speaking at the same time of their effect upon the men to whom they were related. Mrs. Clark's effect on her husband Samuel cannot be underestimated. He is portrayed as a reticent, seclusive, very sensitive individual, while his wife is his antithesis. At the moment when Mrs. Clark's persona seems to be about to solidify, the author inserts a final scene between the two, which acts as a denouement to their relationship.

While on vacation, Maud and Samuel discover new qualities in each other, and confront one another in a rare display of honesty and good humour. The entire scene leaves the reader with an overwhelming sense of reality -- that at last we have been shown an honest dialogue

between two figures that have been little more than caricatures up to that point. While on board ship and removed from the inhibitions of their life in Langholm, Samuel and Maud speak to each other about things that they have kept in their secret hearts. Maud discloses that she always despised Sam a little for not taking more credit in the creation of the Mill. He retorts that he was only refraining from assuming all the glory. He asks her,

"If you despised me, why did you marry me?"
 She looked at him sideways and laughed. "One doesn't need to respect a man in order to love him."
 "You resented it when I withdrew after my father's death. Yet you never said a word about it."
 "Of course I didn't. You withdrew. There was Sibyl."
 "There was Dr. Fry," he said.
 And both laughed. (MM, 176)

Mrs. Clark died in giving birth to Ruth several months later and the senator,

who had stayed in bed to dream himself back into those few, brief months found that he could not bear to think of them. His throat choked. (MM, 176)

For Grove this marks a change from his prairie novels. There, his men had been large enough to accept the challenge of Nature. In The Master of the Mill, in a world of machinery and intellect, physical size dwindles. It is almost as if it were no longer needed. The physically large women in the prairie novels were consistently seeming "stout" and "ponderous" and although they do not change so

much in outward appearance, in Langholm they are described as "stately", and "full-figured". It seems to me that this difference reflects a difference in function that the women must perform. On the prairie the stature of the women indicated that they possessed the essential nourishment required to nurture their husband's dreams. In Langholm their size becomes a symbol of their authority and independence. Also in Langholm, the women's function is more directly related to the society in which they live. They are more to be seen as partners, and less as slaves, in the aristocracy of Langholm.

This question of productivity leads even further into the examination of Grove's women. Since Grove is essentially writing from a nineteenth-century point of view, his vision of women in the prairie novels is often construed as archaic. He sees women as having certain "duties", and although these duties change from time to time, they remain as duties. In other words, there is a quantitative change, but not a qualitative one. His one truly "modern" woman is Ruth Clark, a product of the First World War and excessive wealth. I shall discuss this aspect of Grove in a later chapter.

The men in Grove's works are continually exerting themselves to impose their will upon Nature, or upon machines -- there is a productivity inherent in them, no matter

how vitiated it becomes. The women have no such opportunity, at least not in the prairie novels. I would except only Two Generations from that statement. Their productivity is limited to the running of a household, the raising of children, and little else. Grove portrays the majority of his women in this role as discontented. Not overly given to being articulate, Martha Elliot and Ruth Spalding, express their discontentment by a withdrawal from society. This withdrawal is usually accompanied by an increasing physical grossness.

For the most part, the prairie women begin their lives full of vigour, strong in the challenge against Nature. But as they grow older, and their roles become less and less integral, they seem to become more and more transparent, even superfluous. Grove seems to be implying that the harsh challenge of the Canadian prairie defeats the women because they have no real opportunity to confront it. Only by keeping their husbands healthy and well-fed do they contribute indirectly to the fight against the elusive prairie. In this sense, he is too critical of Ruth, when he puts these words into Mary's mouth:

You have not always been the right wife for Abe. When you saw what it meant to carve a farm out of raw prairie, you gave up and threw the whole burden on him. You thought your children should have a freer and easier life. (FE, 238)

The idea of productivity leads us immediately to a

consideration of Grove's raison d'etre for these particular characters. Since the female characters in the prairie novels with a few exceptions, tend to marry young, and in a state of eagerness and readiness to accept almost any exigency that life might choose to thrust upon them, Grove must have some idea of a woman as a basically productive individual. He shows us women who do just maintain a house, but I think he is aiming at a more subtle interpretation. By constantly illustrating the slow disintegration that takes place in the personalities and bodies of Martha Elliot, and Ruth Spalding, Grove is emphasizing the deadliness of their kind of life. Although he seems to be showing them as "obstructresses" in the paths of their husbands, he is actually writing an indictment of the husbands. Furthermore, Grove is graphically illustrating how the life of the farm fails to provide adequate challenge for the woman.

The disintegration is not immediately perceptible for it takes place gradually. There are no major crises to overcome, no ultimate defeats. Rather, the women are slowly drained from the constant nurturing of the soil, and of the men who till it. Theirs is a battle that does not even include a sense of final victory. The battle is one that must always be maintained and as Grove says, "uses human material up".

Grove saw the prairie woman as unawakened. Like the women of his youth, met during his travels across the United States as a farm labourer, these women needed a touch of another life, another sensibility, to awaken to their true challenge. The aristocratic women of Langholm Grove describes in much the same way. They are more in tune with their world, more independent, but at the same time they lack direction. They are creatures who have been set free from the soil and its exacting demands, and yet they still lack a definite shape in terms of function. They seem adrift upon a sea of custom, which comes to take the place of the harsh life of the farm. They are no more content in fact than their prairie counterparts.

But wives and mothers do not complete Grove's vision of women on the Canadian landscape. To undertake to discover the ultimate complexities of woman's psyche, Grove must also include other characteristic female figures. Grove separates the characteristics of womanhood and creates of them individual characters. The role of the wife he illustrates in the characters of Ruth Spalding and Maud Clark. They are almost "pure" examples of what a wife should be, as far as Grove is concerned. He chooses Martha Elliot and Diane Patterson as examples of motherhood -- although this is a thread that is inherent in almost every one of his women characters.

The next chapter will look at another series of individuals who typify yet another facet of the female character. Grove extracts the single fact of the young, nubile girl from the general character of woman, and creates characters to illustrate it.

CHAPTER II: The Mistress

There is one particular kind of woman in the novels of Grove who seems to have an independent function. Most often, it is this woman who provides the basis for the majority of conflicts within the novels. This woman we call the mistress. The term "mistress" is one used advisedly, for contemporary connotations notwithstanding, the word has particular overtones within the works of Grove themselves.

It is the purpose of this chapter to examine this kind of woman, whether she be found in the role of wife, lover, or whore. It should be noted that the quality of "mistress" is as often a state of mind as an absolute condition and, with the exception of Ellen Amundsen, betrays a quality of temperament. Finally, there is no satisfaction in attempting to blanket such a character with a general definition and each character must be defined in terms relating specifically to her.

The objective in this chapter is not to find out Grove's personal approach to women, although that may result indirectly, but more to discover the similarities that exist among the women, and how the women affect the men in the novels. The problem is again one of vision -- both on the part of the women characters as well as the men. It is precisely the interlocking of the two discrete visions

that forms the basis of the emotional confrontations in the works. Grove is not dealing with a hortus conclusus created from his own individual perception of the universe; rather, as was mentioned earlier, he is concerned with the problems of existence on the grand scale.

The use of a multiplicity of perspectives in the definition of a character has been dwelt on in the first chapter, and it is also a pertinent factor to be considered at this time. In those areas in which the phenomenon of the mistress is examined by the author, we find a notable increase in the amount of editorial observation throughout the narrative. This quite often takes the form of an omniscient-sounding comment, interjecting information not available to either the reader or the characters in the novels. Similarly, this function is sometimes given to a character -- Charles Vanbruik in Fruits of the Earth -- whose role is one of objective observation, and who has no active part in the mainstream of the novel. This subtle technique is displayed to best advantage in The Master of the Mill, and will be discussed concurrently with that work.

The "unattached" women in Grove's novels fall into two rough categories: those that are physically unattached -- that is, unmarried -- and those that are psychologically unattached, whether they be married or single. Of the first

category, Ellen Amundsen is the most striking example, and Olga Lund serves as her foil. Lydia Hausman falls into the selfsame category also, although her situation is less precise. The second category implies a sensibility of a particular variety, and the characters who best fit into this category are Clara Vogel and Sibyl Carter. These two arbitrary classifications do not cover the entire spectrum of Grove's characters, and the notable exception, insofar as this chapter is concerned, is Maud Dolittle. Because of her complex nature as a character, it is best that she be discussed in less limited terms. These categories depend to a large extent upon the "eyes" that are employed to perceive them. In Settlers of the Marsh, the eyes that perform the greatest function are those of Niels Lindsteät. The object of his vision is Ellen Amundsen. At the same time, there is another pair of eyes supplementing Niels', giving us yet another perception albeit a less-noticeable one.

At the time of their first meeting, Ellen coolly disregards Niels, and gives the impression of being very worldly. Her appearance is given in surprising detail, and that fact, together with the description, gives the reader a clue that this girl will figure highly in the resolution of the novel. She is described as -- somewhat above medium height, taller than her father, with

wide hips and a mature bust. Her hair was straw yellow and neatly but plainly brushed back and gathered into a knot above the nape of her neck . . . Her whole attitude, even to her father, spoke of self-centered repose and somewhat defiant aloofness. (SM, 21)

Grove begins by establishing her as the fair one, gives an indication of her character, and then goes on.

Her eyes were light-blue, her features round, and her complexion a pure, Scandinavian white. But it was the expression that held him: hers was the face of a woman; not of a girl. There was a great, ripe maturity in it, and a look as if she knew more of life than her age would warrant. No smile lighted her features; her eyes were stern and nearly condemnatory. (SM, 21)

Despite this description, Ellen is practically a non-entity at this early stage, with only a hint of the personality that will appear later. Ellen and Niels' first contact comes in the form of a look.

It was a level, quiet look, unswerving and irresponsible. It did not establish a bond; it held no message, neither of acceptance nor of disapproval . . . (SM, 23)

This impersonality that so disturbs Niels is a manifestation of Ellen's psychological aversion to men. Because of scenes between her parents that she was exposed to, she has completely eliminated any capacity to respond to men.

The portrayal of Ellen is a consistent one. As an individual, she is given very little consciousness of her own and therefore is an almost neutral entity. But as far as her effect upon Niels is concerned, she is definitely positive. Only when she begins to develop a degree of psychological intimacy with Niels does she begin to emerge.

And yet it is Ellen whom Niels comes to place in his vision of the future. Because of her total lack of any salient sexuality, Niels finds her perfect for the completion of his homely scene.

Settlers of the Marsh is primarily concerned with visions. These visions are the root of all the agony sustained by Niels, Ellen, and Clara Vogel. Early in the first chapter of Settlers,

a vision took hold of Niels: of himself and a woman, sitting of a mid-winter's night by the light of a lamp and in front of a fire, with the pitter-patter of children's feet sounding down from above . . . He tried to see the face of the woman; but it entirely evaded him . . . (SM, 47)

and this vision comes again and again throughout the remainder of the book, with only slight variations. When the vision "which was so familiar to him [begins] to dominate him more and more", (SM, 61) the woman's face becomes more clear. The consistency of the vision, even to the language used, is notable:

The picture which he saw, of himself and a woman in a cosy room, with the homely light of a lamp shed over their shoulders, while the winter winds stalked and howled outside and while from above the pitter-patter of children's feet sounded down, took more and more definite form . . .

There could be no doubt any longer: the woman in the picture was Ellen, the girl. He longed for her sight: . . . (SM, 61)

It is because of these visions that the Niels-Allen relationship is born and progresses. By virtue of their fairy-tale quality, the visions shed a considerable amount of light on

the perceptive abilities of Niels. They illustrate, in a variety of ways, the static nature of Niels' idea of not only Ellen, but life in general. It seems as if, for Niels, life is an "icon", something that is rather than something on a continuum.

Through Niels' eyes we are given little indication of the character and emotional substance of Ellen and yet she is possibly the most important single force in the work. Niels is seen as an individual who will meet in an almost fatal conflict with the movement of life because of his solidified concept of it. Ellen is one example of his myopic view.

How then are we to avoid the tempting conclusion that Niels' view is also that of Grove's? Again we must consider the narrative aspects of which Niels is only one.

It is mainly by the tedious reiteration of the vision in Niels' mind that the prime narrator conveys to us the idea that Niels has a flawed conception of life. The use of the same words to describe the vision and, simultaneously, the notable lack of a narrative line concerning Ellen per se, both serve to emphasize the point.

It is Niels who sees Ellen as someone almost devoid of femininity, as opposed to Olga Lund or Clara Vogel. He remarks that

. . . Ellen, when she donned her working clothes, had

changed from a virgin, cool and detached, into a being that was almost sexless, . . . (SM, 49)

and also,

In his mind's eye Niels placed Ellen and Olga side by side: easy-going sloth and what was almost asceticism. (SM, 39)

Almost by way of a footnote, it is interesting to note that the author himself displayed a decided preference for the slim, fair type of woman. His colleague, Miss Wiens, whom he later makes his wife is described in In Search of Myself as

good to look at. She had an extraordinarily striking figure, tall and slender like my own, yet well-modelled. Her appearance, I said to myself, was aesthetically satisfying. (ISM, 274)

Ellen does not arouse carnal passion in the breast of Niels, rather she inspires him to a feeling of "completeness" or "wholeness". She is the perfect complement to his life, fulfilling all the demands of his narrow vision of the future. It is little wonder then that she can never assume any realistic proportions while under the interpretive eye of this man. The author implies by his treatment of Niels and Ellen that the former's vision of the future is not only misdirected, but utterly without any basis in fact. The fact that the reader does not believe in the vision, while still believing in Niels, is proof of the success of the technique employed by Grove.

Since Grove has established the character of Niels

as one who sees only dimly what is taking place in his environment, we are prepared for an equally myopic view of Clara Vogel. The narrator and the major character Niels are working almost at odds with each other in the passages in which Clara is described. Niels sees her as the fiery, dark creature of forbidden pleasures, while the narrator's treatment, interspersed throughout, is of a more accurate nature. Niels has decided exactly where to place Clara in the scheme of things, even before he has spoken to her. This is the same error that he made upon seeing Ellen for the first time. In fact, he refuses to admit of any individuality of character where these two women are concerned.

Mrs. Clara Vogel is introduced to Niels as the "gay widow of the settlement" (SM, 36), and we find the two impressions -- that of the narrator, and of Niels -- working together:

She [Clara] was dressed in a remarkably pretty and becoming way, with ruffles around her plump, smooth-skinned, though rather pallid face. In spite of the season she wore a light, washable dress which fitted her slender and yet plump body without a fold. Her waist showed a V-shaped opening at the throat which gave her -- by contrast to the other women -- something peculiarly feminine; beside her, the others looked neuter.

But more than anything else in her round, laughing, coal-black eyes attracted attention. They were in everlasting motion and seemed to be dancing with merriment. (SM, 35)

Mrs. Vogel is strongly attracted to Niels, and her obvious

flirtations begin to disturb him. She openly invites him with her eyes and her gestures, and Niels becomes more and more entangled in his dreams.

On her lips lay a smile; her black, beady eyes seemed to dance when they rested on his friend, and to glow with a strange warmth when they lighted on his own . . . And she drove on, not without throwing over her shoulder a glance which sent a tingling sensation along Niels' spine. (SM, 52)

Niels is like a child in his confusion as he contemplates the situation he is in. His choice of words in his ruminations is notable,

Woman had never figured as a concrete thing in Niels' thought of his future in this new country. True, he had seen in his visions a wife and children; but the wife had been a symbol merely. Now that he was in the country of his dreams and gaining a foothold, it seemed as if individual women were bent on replacing the vague, schematic figures he had had in his mind. He found this intrusion strangely disquieting. (SM, 52)

It is important at this time, as it will be more so later, to note that Niels' is exceedingly chaste. Grove makes delicate use of his narrative in what today would be almost a ludicrous situation. Niels is chaste in mind and in body to such a degree that even idle fantasies about premarital sex disturb him profoundly. This psychological fact looms more ominous as Ellen and Clara begin to occupy an increasing amount of time in his thoughts. His vision of the homely hearth scene includes Ellen as its natural object. But Clara interferes continually. Niels' dreams of Ellen are chaste and reserved, removed from any immediacy.

How much more intimate, he sometimes thought, was his still slenderer acquaintance with Mrs. Vogel! Two or three times only had he met her; yet there was almost a secret understanding between them . . .

But whenever he had been dreaming of her and his thought then reverted to Ellen, he felt guilty; he felt defiled as if he had given in to sin. (SM, 63)

Mrs. Vogel's impact becomes one of increasing baseness and evil. Niels feels that his attraction to her is something of a lower order, "Which was not worthy of the man who had seen Ellen." (SM, 62) Mrs. Vogel and Niels' thoughts of her are portrayed in such a way as to make them seem like serious intrusions. Niels has one vision which is wholesome, and untainted with anything overtly sexual, and Mrs. Vogel causes another vision to spring into his mind. The vision of Mrs. Vogel is a diabolical one.

. . . there arose in him the vision again of that room where he sat with a woman, his wife. But no pitter-patter of little children's feet sounded down from above; nor were they sitting on opposite sides of a table in front of a fire-place. He was crouching on a low stool in front of the woman's seat; and he was leaning his head on her. And when he looked up into her face, that face bore the features and the smile of the woman who had spoken to him that very night . . . [Mrs. Vogel] (SM, 79)

It is clear that Grove intends us to see Clara Vogel as almost exploiting Niels' passionate nature. Being more sophisticated than Niels, Clara knows that Niels is ready to release his passion on anyone, if he were given the opportunity to do so. Clara entices Niels, scarcely realizing what the ultimate result of her seduction will be. She whispers the directions to her cottage, then says,

"Sooner or later you'll come. Come soon. Before I return to the city. I am a lonely woman, you know . . . " And, nodding at him, she lost herself in the crowd. (SM, 77)

As we have seen above, her unrestrained sexual attack on Niels utterly warps and perverts his vision. Even his unique single-mindedness wavers under her feminine wiles. Although Grove's sympathies seem here to be with Niels, and his treatment of Clara is in terms usually reserved for a predatory animal, there remains the impression that Clara is the realist, Niels the naive idealist in a world of dreams.

Through the conscious mind of Niels, Grove is able to create sharp, distinct pictures of the two women who play such opposing roles in Niels' life. Ellen and Clara are constantly being compared in his mind, as well as Olga and Mrs. Lund, by way of additional contrast. By subtly altering his descriptive language, Grove tempers the characters of the women, shades them more delicately than he could in direct, descriptive narrative. Because of Niels marked tendency to idealize, then solidify his ideals, we are able to see the differences in the characters of Ellen and Clara, even though our direct exposure to them is limited. Niels sees Ellen and Clara in such terms as, "one was a mate; the other, a toy . . . " (SM, 80) Ellen becomes more and more idealized in Niels' mind and hence, in ours as well.

She [Ellen] seemed taller, slenderer than she had looked; more girlish, younger even; above all, less impersonal. (SM, 98)

Up to the time of her father's death, Ellen has gained her existence, as I have pointed out, only from Niels and from the author. With the death of her father, she changes. The effect upon Niels is electric.

For the first time she had smiled and even laughed. She had stepped down from a pedestal and walked among humans . . . (SM, 100)

From this sudden point, Ellen has a voice and existence of her own, however short-lived. She is more relaxed, her tight, straight hair is now wavy and loose, her eyes lose their critical look. And now that we have a better opportunity to view Ellen more or less first-hand, we are aware of a new restraint that binds her. That she is attracted to Niels there can be no doubt, but she is too inhibited.

During the salient development of their relationship, Ellen emerges as more of a character and less of an ideal. It is during the storm scene and following that Ellen finally gains an individuality. In what is perhaps one of Grove's best scenes, Niels and Ellen come close to one another physically and psychologically. The raw sudden violence of the storm rages above their heads, while they huddle together for warmth and shelter in a haystack on the prairie. Ellen confronts Niels and herself during the emotional sequence which follows, and the confrontation

is the beginning of a dialogue. Ellen, following that episode, confesses her fears of anything sexual, due to her exposure to the sordid and bestial behavior of her parents, especially her father. Even to have confessed this deep-rooted fear is a breakthrough for Ellen, and serves to bring her humanity to the fore. Never again is she withdrawn, cool, or critical.

Niels does Clara a great disservice by covering her individual nature with a cloak of his own making. He effectively denies to her any human qualities, preferring instead to see her as a low creature to whom he owes some loyalty. Grove has stated in his autobiography that his sympathies as a writer were always with the women and those sympathies, though obscured often by the powerful writing that creates Niels, continue to exist in Settlers of the Marsh. Looking beneath the dense covering of impressions resulting from Niels' myopia, we can distinguish a Clara who is at heart an honest woman, betrayed by her husband's narrow dreams and fancies. It was never Clara's wish to marry Niels, but she let herself be led into what could only be a fatal marriage. This is due primarily to Niels' intense and commanding power -- a power which flows directly out of his overpowering belief in his own world. It is because of Niels' failure to see clearly that Clara becomes a monster.

In spite of Niels' inability to represent the true character of this woman, some vestige of her humanity manages to show through. The narrator gives us glimpses of another Clara Vogel, one who is only a sensual creature, one who desperately needs love and security -- not a psychologically strong woman in any sense. Her clarity of vision is seen in one of the rare moments of direct speech given to her. She observes that Niels is a child in the presence of women, and that if ever a woman wanted him, she would have to take him herself. (SM, 131)

For a time Clara is content to go along with the masquerade of blissful matrimony. She finally begins to break down under the pressure of quiet disapproval which emanates from her husband. Believing himself hopelessly mired in a swamp of depravity, Niels is not capable of giving any substantial affection or understanding to his wife. Several days after the marriage Niels is consumed by a whirlwind of thoughts and feelings. His "marriage seemed to him almost an indecency . . ." (SM, 189)

It is only when her life with Niels becomes wholly intolerable that Clara seeks some outside stimulation. Her choice of extra-marital pursuits is a reflection on her life with Niels. She debases herself by "entertaining" the local men and young boys, and becomes what Niels has always considered her -- a whore. She is the victim of

Niels' vision of her, and of the world. By refusing to see her in a real way, he forces her either to leave him -- a move which would put her back to where she began -- or to accept his vision of her as accurate and conform to it. The tragedy is not hers alone, however, because Niels also slips into a spiritual limbo and becomes a caricature of his own self-image. He becomes an emotionally drained husk, a parody of virtue and chastity. Alone and helpless, each seeks a remedy to put an end to such a bizarre existence.

The final shock comes with Niels' realization of his wife's immoral behavior, and the shock causes him to lose his grasp on his vision for a moment. The loss plunges him, not into cold reality, but into a limbo totally devoid of value. His reaction assumes the quality of a purge and he cleanses his life of both his narrow vision and the perverted example of it in one act -- he kills his wife.

The implications of Settlers of the Marsh are clear: Clara Vogel becomes what she becomes not through a tragic flaw of her own character, but because of the powerful grip of another individual's vision of the universe. The tragedy in the marsh country is not one limited to that country, nor to the kinds of people to be found there. It is one that concerns the whole fabric of human relationships. The wilderness consciousness, as illustrated by the

character of Niels Lindstedt, is presented as being basically of a single-minded nature. The author is examining the place of human values in the frontier landscape, in this novel, in Fruits of the Earth, and also in Our Daily Bread. The problem is essentially one of survival and the question is whether or not the same individual who rips his sustenance from the grasp of a hostile environment is able to experience the sophistication and emotionally demanding phenomenon of human love.

The denouement of Settlers seems to indicate that the man may only discover himself and others after he has loosed his hold on determining, or striving to determine, his own destiny. Niels' return to society and to Ellen marks the beginning of his freedom. He is free from prison walls of concrete, and from the prison walls of his own mind.

The tone of the narrative changes subtly during these last few scenes, and simultaneously there is more presence given to Ellen, who up until this point has had little to say on her own. The narrator steps back one step into the third person for added objectivity, and uses the present tense to convey a feeling of both immediacy and timelessness to the action. As Ellen and Niels retrace the old paths they are moving neither into the future nor into the past -- they are only moving together.

Clara Vogel is only one of several women classed under

the heading "mistress". As we have seen in her case, the title is not as apt as it might be. The character of Lydia Hausman in The Yoke of Life⁷ is quite similar. The Yoke of Life was not published until 1930, five years later than Settlers of the Marsh, although the two were written in the same year, 1920. The motif of Yoke is similar to that of Settlers and takes the form of a quest. It is an introspective novel dealing ostensibly with the problems of existence as they concern Len Sterner. Len is obsessed by a vision as Niels was obsessed by one, and the object of his vision is a girl, Lydia Hausman.

The various narrative techniques developed in Settlers are used to greater effect in this novel. The character of Lydia is developed indirectly through the character of Len. Like Niels, Len is not a free man and consequently the object of his vision is no more free to move and live than were Ellen or Clara. Len Sterner is Grove's archetypal (for this period) male figure -- introspective, philosophical in a naive way, deeply passionate but at the same time almost wholly inarticulate about his passion. He is a man bound in the chains of his dreams, forged in an effort to determine his own destiny. The novel concerns itself with the loosing of those bonds that bind Len, and also those that he has forged for Lydia. The narrative takes place almost entirely inside the mind of Len, and this

continuous stream of consciousness burns a picture of him indelibly into the mind of the reader.

Closely linked to the entire conception of freedom and existence is the examination of the pastoral rural existence as opposed to the urban life. The city becomes a metaphor for Len's psychological movement from prisoner to free man, and almost certainly stands as a coexistent symbol for Lydia.

Len meets Lydia when he is only a maturing adolescent, but she is his first love and abiding passion. He also forms a vision of the future, with Lydia at its centre. It is not to be, however, and circumstances force them apart, Lydia to the urban life, Len to the bush to earn money for his family. He carries within him a portrait of Lydia which he cherishes and mentally fondles during his long absences from her.

The main body of the novel consists of Len's quest for Lydia through the labyrinth of the city. Len creates a Grail of Lydia, and when he finds her she has become a diabolical one. His overpowering passion is more than enough for both of them, and he takes her to the wilderness, where they are to die together, lashed side by side, on the storm-tossed waters of Lake Winnipeg, known only in the novel as "the Lake".

The parallels between Lydia in this novel, and Ellen

and Clara in Settlers are striking. Not so much because of their actual characteristics, but in the way that they are seen by Len and Niels respectively. Ellen Amundsen figured centrally in the initial vision conceived by Niels and, ultimately, so did Clara. But Ellen, unlike Clara, never came to accept the vision as herself: she never believed in it, therefore she retained her own individuality albeit at the cost of some mental anguish. Clara on the other hand, and Lydia as well, accepted the vision of themselves and grew to become the vision. Clara begins as an honest woman with intentions no more malicious than anyone else's. Niels sees her as a temptress and as an evil woman. She grows to accept this debased perception of herself, and ultimately becomes that kind of woman. Len envisions Lydia as pure, virginal and good. In spite of the fact that she lets herself be seduced first by a strange man, and finally by the affluence of the city; and that she becomes a paid prostitute; Len still sees her as good. Thus she comes to accept, in part, that interpretation of herself. She leaves with Len for the wilderness to confirm the goodness in herself which Len feels is there, and to free herself from the depravity of her debased existence in the city. The power of the vision is inescapable.

Len does not blindly continue in his conception of Lydia as good when he has seen evidence to indicate the

contrary. He is horrified to find her in the state she is in. In spite of his horror, he still has an intense desire to find the "true" Lydia -- the Lydia of his vision. But the true Lydia is no more the real Lydia than was Clara a real whore. Both Len and Niels strove to justify their separate visions both to themselves and to the universe.

Len Sterner is not a free man, and the cause of his confinement is also the cause of Lydia's loss of freedom. In an attempt to free himself from his dream, Len makes a pilgrimage to the wilderness. Even there he cannot let his dream dissipate and the two are sucked inexorably down into a vortex of their own making -- bound in cords together, in death, symbolic of the cords that bound them in life.

It cannot pass unnoticed that the selfsame mechanisms are at work with respect to the mistresses and whores in Grove's novels, that were informing the characterizations of the wives in the prairie novels. The farm woman has an ill-defined role at the best of times. As was pointed out in the chapter dealing with wives, the lack of clear-cut responsibilities has a deadening effect upon the women. Grove goes to great lengths to describe the grossness, both physical and psychological, of Martha Elliot, and Ruth Spalding. He is careful to point out too their diseased bodies, crumbling into untimely graves. The wife in that context becomes less and less verbal, relying upon physical

means to communicate until, at the last, that too is gone. Grove was well-aware of the environment into which a farmer brought his wife. He had witnessed it from a close proximity. He refers to their lives as "utter monotony", (ISM, 223) and "hopeless vacuity". (ISM, 223)

The situation is made worse in the case of mistresses. They do not have an active role at all -- rather drawing their existence from the fact that one man has included them in his personal vision for the future. On the prairie, they have no independent life, yet, as Grove points out in his autobiography, "woman is the slave; just as she is the slave in the uncivilized steppes of Siberia" (ISM, 223-224). But she is equally damned if she ventures into the city. Clara Vogel, Lydia Hausman, and Frances Spalding all are excellent examples of what Grove feels the City does to the soul of woman.

Grove does not suggest a resolution for this tragic paradox. As M.G. Parks has pointed out in his introduction to Fruits of the Earth,

Grove deliberately chose to avoid a tragic climax for the novel, eschewing a more dramatic and possibly more aesthetically satisfying ending for the sake of "truth" to conditions in the West. (FE, xi)

Perhaps the only solution is mutual death. Lydia has fallen to depths that are intolerable to puritanical Len Sterner, though he has created the conflict. In spite of

his powerful obsessive love for her, he cannot tolerate her past. Lydia is not enough of a true character to face and admit to her own past, and therefore lets herself be shamed and degraded by Len's static sense of values. She is entranced by his tremendous sense of Destiny, a destiny that includes her own; and she allows herself to be mesmerized into a rendezvous with death. But of course, Grove has given her no alternative -- since Len created her, formed her values in his own mind, planned her destiny, and defined her thoughts, she can only fail to live up to his ideal. She must fail.

By creating in Lydia the stereotyped "whore with a heart of gold", Grove is juxtaposing man the dreamer with woman the pragmatic. The implicit power of the city emanates a subtle mercantile consciousness, and breeds a bargaining mentality into its inhabitants. Lydia has illustrated from the beginning that she has such a mentality. She learns at an early age that one must bargain, and compromise, to succeed in life. She leaves her family to "work out" as a hired girl. From there it is only a short step to the city, where, by bargaining her body, she is able to receive the means to support herself. It is this same sense of bargaining, tied in with her own ethics of "the greater good", that saves Len's life. She prostitutes herself to get the necessary funds to pay for Len's

convalescence. It is this very act that damns her in Len's eyes because he sees it as only a manifestation of her complete corruption.

It seems that we finally may believe Grove when he proclaims to his detractors that his sympathies were always with the women. But just at that moment, we become aware of the deep tonal inflections that run quietly but profoundly under the surface of his novels. Whatever he maintains, there is a strong taste of loathing for things sexual in this novel, as there most definitely was in Settlers of the Marsh. It is difficult to separate the author from his characters in this case, due to the consistency of the aversion throughout the entire corpus of his work. There is more than an attempt to characterize in the following passage,

. . . Paint and powder concealed every face. Fashion decreed skirts reaching scarcely below the knee. The world of women seemed to have gone mad with the ostentation of sex. In midwinter they wore almost transparent silk stockings; their busts rose like flowers from the calyxes of their furry wraps. Waists were of the filmiest kind, showing silk undergarments in the colours of the rainbow and betraying rather than concealing the breasts underneath. Shop-windows were gorgeous with silk and satins made up into drawers and vests. (YL, 281)

This from an author who writes in 1933 in Fruits of the Earth that,

nothing destroys modesty and sexual morality in a girl more quickly than the consciousness that suddenly she wears attractive dessous. (FE, 223)

Len's obsession with sex and the trappings and drappings of sex transcends characterization, and rings through the book with the resonances of a manifesto. Len wishes to see things in a "natural" way. He sees make-up as concealment, an attempt to disguise, and he almost gloats when the lake-water takes the starch out of Lydia's dress,

"This sort of thing takes the starch out," he said.

"The starch?"

"The vanity and pretence of the world: the starch from your dress. It is just as serviceable without it." And he nodded to the crumpled, shrunk gingham about her bare legs. (YL, 312)

Len likes bare legs, too, again for their "naturalness". But here is the irony: Lydia is actually more "natural" than Len. His naturalness comes from an inhibition, an aversion, a refusal to look at the world around him in a realistic light. Lydia is only responding to her environment as she finds it. The same is true of Clara Vogel. She is as natural as her own personality allows her to be, and in the eyes of Niels Lindstedt, she is evil.

Grove states in his autobiography that "Even when dealing with human beings, I have always been somewhat of a naturalist." (ISM, 262). This is not taken to imply that his morality, as it infuses his writing, is of a strict and prurient nature. It is closely allied to his sense of the paradoxical nature of human existence as he witnessed it on the frontiers of Canada in the early part

of this century.

Grove distinguished the problems of the frontier women as different from those of the men. By virtue of the fact that they were of a certain temperament themselves, any enjoyment of life was precluded. Just as the men were by nature unable to relax, settle down and enjoy the fruits of the earth, so the women were unable to find a satisfactory relationship with these men. Ultimately the paradox lies in the existence of a man; the tragedy is woman's.

A more technically refined and functionally more sophisticated woman is to be found in The Master of the Mill. The three Mauds of this novel are seen by R.E. Watters as "a culmination of Grove's previous novels". (MM, viii) It is clear that Grove had some purpose in giving the three main female characters the same name. Each is herself a part of what is ultimately the "compleat" woman.

Although Grove has tempered his vision of women somewhat from that of the prairie novels, he retains his visions of woman as motivator and helpmate. This meagre view is expressed in an indirect fashion. Grove, rather than describing the attributes of a woman who knows her place, illustrates to what depths she may fall when she refuses or is incapable of fulfilling her role.

Of the multitude of women in The Master of the Mill who form the basis of the narration, two particular women

emerge that are relevant to this chapter. They are Maud Dolittle and Sibyl Carter.

Both women act directly upon the major character, Samuel Clark, but where their effects are similar, their methods are quite different. Maud Dolittle is one kind of "emancipated" woman. She is unmarried for one thing, and handles her life in much the same way as would a man. She seems utterly untouched by emotion, and, as far as Samuel Clark is concerned, is a man. She provides for Clark the kind of support which his own wife cannot, and is a silent partner in all his business affairs. There is no hint of sexual involvement between these two, although some of Maud's outbursts are heavy with dramatic irony. Unlike the men in the prairie novels, Samuel Clark is not obsessed with a vision which includes these women, or any women for that matter, but there remains a subtle dependence that is often difficult to articulate. At times throughout the novel, there are suspicions that the two are involved in an affaire, but the reader is never convinced of this. Their relationship is impeccably asexual. The initial description of Maud Dolittle is one that we have come to expect from Grove, and one that anticipates the ultimate characterization,

Sam became conscious of the fact that Miss Dolittle was in the room. He rose and faced her from the windows.

As always, her mere presence cheered him; after all,

he was not absolutely alone. It was to be the first-fruit of his power to give her a position nominally next in authority to his own.

The girl, medium-sized, extraordinarily good-looking -- though, no doubt she would get stout in later life -- above all vital to her fingertips, greeted her chief with a half confidential smile . . . [*italics mine*] (MM, 61)

The one word "stout" immediately reminds us of Ruth Spalding and Martha Elliot, as well as gives us an indication of Maud's role in the course of the novel. Grove's predilection for either tall, ascetic blondes, or "stout", slow women is remarkable. They are continually cast in roles where they are not required to maintain a sexual attitude. Maud will eventually seduce the Senator's son later in the novel, but even that has overtones of motherhood about it. In the light of this, the reader is vastly amused at Sam Clark's wife's proddings about a suspected affair. Mrs. Clark asks her husband if he had seen Mr. Beatty,

"'I didn't. I saw nobody but Miss Dolittle and Miss Albright.'

"'Miss Domuch!' Mrs. Clark mocked. 'Was she in black?'

"'I didn't notice. I did see Miss Albright's flowing weeds.'

"'Sam!' Mrs. Carter reproved as if he had hinted at some impropriety. Momentarily she forgot that he was the president now. Sententiously she added, 'When a man doesn't notice a woman's clothes, he notices her.' (MM, 78)

Samuel Clark, as head of the vast flour empire, allows Grove a great deal of freedom of characterization. He is aloof, restrained, and seems to have an elusive quality about him, that finally resolves into an almost god-like presence. With such a figure, the author must create

characters that will complement and reflect that figure -- that will, like Senator Clark, capture an ephemeral quality of life and so be rendered more god-like. The physical setting into which he injects these deities also reflects their nature. They are seen moving mysteriously about at the top of tall buildings, and the daily routine of the office life assumes a majesty and a mystery that only augments the already-established sensation of an Olympian palace.

Unlike the inhabitants of Olympus, however, these mortals do not partake of the complete life. There is a certain degree of interaction lacking, especially interaction of a substantially human variety. Everything is business, and there is no time for what Samuel Clark would have looked upon as the frivolities of existence. But he did not look upon them at all, he did not consider them because they were not an active facet of his businessman's asceticism. Earlier, I have mentioned both Grove, and many of his male characters as being sensualists. I would include Sam Clark in that category as well, except to add that his sensuality was of a type so refined, or perhaps so inhibited, that it only expressed itself in a longing for a quality of mind, an intellectual delight in the textures of society, the colours of his own emotions, the shape of ideas. His relationship with Maud Dolittle

will bear this out, as it is recounted by the narrator, at this time Odette Charlebois.

'He [Samuel Clark] liked her, liked her very much; and he admired her very great ability. He listened to her advice. But, if anything, he looked upon her with the sort of affection a father has for a favorite daughter.'
(MM, 181)

But as far as Maud Dolittle's interest in Sam was concerned, though not exactly one of lust, was still of a higher order than Sam's.

'Yet I am equally positive that Miss Dolittle had all along found her inspiration in her employer; he had been her god.'
(MM, 181)

Had Grove wished to malign the character of Maud Dolittle, he could have done so readily, and would have done so at an earlier stage in his development. Instead he gives to her a gentleness and an overwhelming feminine grace that is her salvation in his eyes. Although she seems to have the selfsame kind of "bargaining" mentality as Mrs. Vogel, and although she seduces the Senator's son, Grove pardons her. (MM, 237) There are perhaps two reasons for this remarkable treatment of Miss Dolittle. Like a man, Maud expresses throughout her entire life a dedication, a loyalty to her own chosen life. When in the world of commerce, she exhibited only that exterior that befitted her role; when in the feminine world, she was the total female, giving herself completely to that role. Then too, Maud never marries. For her to have married would have

been to adulterate her spiritual liaison with the Senator, and that she could not do. Like Niels Lindstedt, and Abe Spalding, Maud Dolittle can effect no compromise between the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit. She is bound by her own unique vision of life, and of herself in that life. This kind of devotion, this kind of single-mindedness about one's own destiny, is an implicit facet of Grove's own life, as illustrated in his autobiography. To leave the impress of his mind upon the age was Grove's own vision and in Samuel Clark and Maud Dolittle he has shown a sympathy, and perhaps a projection of himself on paper. Grove is more explicit about the character of Maud than ever he could be about himself. Edmund, the Senator's son, speaks to his father about her:

'If, instead of Maud Fanshawe, I had married Maud Dolittle; and if she had held the key to control in her hands, I should not have hesitated for one moment: she was a woman born to bear responsibilities. But she shrank from being more than my mistress. She should have been your wife and my stepmother. She was, she is, a woman fit to be the mother of kings and rulers of empire . . . ' (MM, 220)

Many times this thesis has addressed itself to an examination of the aspects of physical size as a symbol of quality of life in the women characters of Grove's novels. It has been pointed out that grossness of body indicates a deadening of the spirit, and that bulk of the body is usually malignant in the organic sense as well. As Ruth Spalding's spirit grew less and less viable and

energetic, so her body became heavy and unmanageable, almost like something not part of her at all. Maud Dolittle is also described as a large woman, and that,

" . . . in later life, after her connection with the family ceased, she became stout." (MM, 182)

Maud's "stoutness" never becomes the stoutness of Ruth Spalding or Martha Elliot, however.

Grove describes Maud Dolittle in words "writ large" and her size is a factor in her favour for it emphasizes her feminine grace.

' . . . she had about her something of the heart-rending beauty of the woods in the fall, gorgeous and ostentatious, as if in protest against the coming of winter . . .

.
The smooth pallor of her skin was suffused with nobody knew what trace of colour; her glance, commonly steady, was evasive or trembling; her dark-brown hair electric with a metallic sheen enhanced by the rubies scattered through it and burning with the glitter of dark flames; her body, encased in a coal-black gown of chiffon-velvet, had thrilled to something which sent emanations about her like an aura; her lips were a miracle of freshness made sensitive by expectancy! (MM, 235-236)

This figure is a woman that we have not yet seen in the works of Grove. This portrait is notably lacking in the usual ironic barbs concerning powder and paint, lacy underclothes, and all other accoutrements of feminine seduction. Almost animal-like in her movements, Maud yields to the woman underneath her exterior, and moves towards a rendezvous with Samuel's son Edmund.

She was transformed by the elaborate and yet nonchalant grace with which she handled herself, as if she were looking on at herself from the outside; as if she were entering

a magic path in enchanted woods, knowing it to be a path at once full of danger and glory. There could be no doubt; she was conscious of the seduction of her snow-white shoulders and the straight, bare back. (MM, 236)

Grove allows Maud Dolittle a voluptuousness that he has heretofore denied his female characters. Maud languishes in her own sexuality as,

. . . bending her head with a leisurely smile, she looked at herself in the large pier-glass between two electric lights. A moment later a maid was holding her white fur wrap for her; and slowly, with voluptuous langour, as though revelling in the very maturity of her body as in a supreme luxury, she shrugged into its enveloping folds. (MM, 237)

In the final scenes of The Master of the Mill, with the prime narrator, the Senator, now dead, time is suddenly accelerated. We see Maud Dolittle for the last time, unobscured by the eyes of either the Senator or the two women narrators. She is suddenly aged, although still quite dynamic, and we realize that we have never seen her as she grew older. Her vigour and her youth were kept alive in the memories of the narrators, and it is somewhat of a shock to see her as she actually is. Grove is careful not to destroy the image totally, however, and his treatment of her reveals an admiration of her continued strength of conviction. Unlike her feminine counterparts, Maud Dolittle has not aged intellectually, and her spirit, her dedication to her own destiny, is still viable. Grove gives her the last word in The Master of the Mill, "I have come to place

a great confidence in the capacity of the collective human mind." (MM, 332)

The second woman in The Master of the Mill is Sibyl Carter. As was the case with Maud Dolittle, Sibyl Carter cannot be wholly defined or discussed without simultaneously examining her effect upon the master of the mill himself, Samuel Clark. She is described by Odette Charlebois as "a phenomenon, physically, and morally." (MM, 117), and from their first meeting, Sibyl and Sam Clark are linked. Grove is careful to anticipate their ultimate relationship at an early point, in fact, Sibyl's impact on not only the Clark family, but on the entire community, is sketched out prior to her introduction by the narrator.

She fell in love with Mr. Clark at first sight. Perhaps she had already reasoned herself into some such thing. He was the multi-millionaire, you see. She came near wrecking Mr. Clark's marriage; she upset the town; she was at least instrumental in bringing about a strike.' (MM, 117)

Therefore we are at least partially prepared to meet this "advanced, outspoken, fin-de-siècle" (MM, 116) individual. We are not prepared for her physical appearance and mannerisms. Grove has her described thus:

' . . . a tall young woman rose animatedly out of an armchair at one of the windows, dropping a book to the floor. Her face, at first sight, seemed sharp and thin; but it was tremendously alive and attractive; it was dominated by her large, turquoise eyes and a bold nose as well as by a halo of fine, loose, straw-yellow hair . . . '

.
The most striking feature of her narrow, boyish figure which

had no curves, was its extreme flexibility . . . Over her flat breast she wore a nile-green fichu . . . ' (MM, 118)

Grove seems to have inverted his usual characterization in The Master of the Mill. Whereas before the coal-black dress, and dark, burning hair of Maud Dolittle would have meant depraved sexuality and diabolical passion, as was the case with Clara Vogel, now it becomes an image for mature sophistication and feminine grace. The outward description of Sibyl is reminiscent of Ellen Amundsen, fair, slim, and blue-eyed. In Ellen's case her appearance became a symbol of her aloofness, her asceticism and her lack of viable sexuality. Sibyl is neither an ascetic, nor is she lacking in an overt sexuality, although at first her sexuality seems to be just so much coyness. During the first meeting between the Clark family and the Carter family, Sibyl makes an obvious play for Sam Clark. She deliberately asks him to kiss her, by way of welcome, and he reluctantly obeys. She then contrives to have his reluctant kiss land on her lips, rather than her cheek as he had intended. This is probably a childish move on her part, but Samuel Clark possesses a markedly different set of values than those of Mrs. Carter, and he is embarrassed and made uncomfortable by this insignificant occurrence.

As we have seen, Grove exhibits a marked tendency to create very positive characters -- characters who see their

lives to come in certain definite terms, then prepare themselves in a way best suited to arrive at those goals. With the male characters, this sense of personal destiny takes the form of a vision which begins as a means to an end, and becomes an end in itself. Sibyl immediately sees that Samuel Clark is to be her personal challenge.

Sibyl, and Samuel's wife Maud become inseparable, and this of course places Sibyl and Samuel in close proximity. She consciously acquires the reputation of being a "loose" woman, flirting and playing elaborate sexual games with other men of the town. But, as the narrator points out, She barely concealed the fact any longer that her aim was to seduce the master of the mill; and that her attacks on others were only oblique attacks on him. (MM, 129)

Even Sam himself, the last to realize the trap being laid for him, is finally made aware of the situation. Samuel Clark attends a dance with his wife, and Sibyl Carter is there, in her usual splendid finery. When her seductive behavior results in her being accosted in a dim corridor by another man, that man,

felt his hands slapped; and he heard an angry cry: "Stand off!"

"No," he answered.

"Stand off," she repeated. "You are not my game."

.

It was a revelation! even Sam knew that he was her game; that it was he to whom she displayed herself. (MM, 131)

Samuel is sucked inexorably into the vortex Sibyl has sent spinning about him, and he is led to do things which

he ordinarily would not do. This is similar to the helplessness of Lydia, as she stood in the power of Len Sterner's vision. Samuel is very vulnerable to Sibyl's unified onslaught. She insists that he take her on a tour of the mill and he agrees to do so. It is the first of a series of mistakes that he makes with regard to this predatory female.

Ready for the trip through the mill, Sibyl, in full sight of two score hurrying men, rested her free hand in the crook of Sam's elbow, with a charming gesture of intimacy between relatives.

Too late Sam realized that he had made a grievous mistake in not refusing to comply with her demand. The men stared. His entrance, with this woman on his arm, caused a cessation of work. The mill-hands exuded hatred. But he could no longer retrieve the step. (MM, 135)

Sibyl forces Sam to take her to the exact spot where he first took his wife. For Sam, this is close to a sacrilegious act, and Sibyl is aware of it: she knows that this action will tend to usurp Maud in Sam's mind, as well as make her own intentions clear. When even this fails to achieve any success, she resorts to physical means. While in his office, she invites him to see her in a new dress, one that would be more revealing than concealing. He declines. She takes her final step,

"Nonsense," she repeated, bring her flushed face close to his, and reaching out with her free hand to ruffle his auburn hair. "Sam!" she whispered with moist breath. "I'll tell you. You think, She is thin. I am. But I'm not only thin. I have pretty breasts. Won't you see me in that frock tonight? Or, for that matter, without it?" And, failing to realize his mood, trusting in the power of

physical contact, she slipped down on his knees, with a sinuous motion, twining her arms about his neck and pressing his head to her bosom. (MM, 139)

This scene is similar to the seduction of Niels Lindstedt in Settlers of the Marsh. Only this time, Grove has replaced the dark woman with a fair one. Samuel Clark's reaction to this approach is a result of two things: his preoccupation with ideals, in this case marriage; and his timidity of anything overtly sexual. Sibyl is not as clever as she would like to think, or she would have realized that the way to seduce a sensual ascetic like Clark is to be as sexually non-aggressive as possible. Such an individual can have only one reaction in such a situation.

Sam rose. For a moment, she clinging to him, they were in danger of falling.

Like a fury she recovered herself and faced him.

"That's final?"

He did not answer at once. Sadness invaded him; he felt sorry for her. "Too bad it should have come to this," he said.

"You've fish-blood!" she hissed, turned, picked up her coat, faced him once more, "Joseph!", and was gone. (MM, 139)

Grove is not content to represent Sibyl as a sexual phenomenon only. This type of woman, as illustrated in his works, has the power to wreak destruction on a much larger scale than merely person to person. By making use of Sibyl Carter as a symbol of sexual power, Grove ultimately illustrates how this particular kind of power could devastate a society. Sibyl becomes a metaphor for the

frustration and hostility of the town itself, as well as an objective epitome for the widening class-differential as Grove saw it. She is both a product and a perpetuator of a society that manifests extremes of wealth, education, and opportunity. Her existence at a time in the history of capitalism when management and labour were beginning to display overt differences of opinion is particularly opportune. It gives Grove the opportunity to use the figure of Sibyl as a symbol of the decadent, and even corrupt aristocracy, sharply contrasted by his descriptions of the mill-hands and their families. Like his protagonist, Grove did not have a deep understanding of, or empathy with "the men" as individuals. He did, however, possess a sympathy for their condition in general. Socialism as a concept Samuel Clark found appealing, but he lacked the fundamental emotional understanding of people that would have made his convictions more tolerable. At the same time, Grove (and this is evidenced in Sam Clark) was aware of the paradox of "progress" as it was represented in The Master of the Mill by the sterile, white pyramid of the Mill itself. The Mill, which both provides and takes away, gives the novel its first consideration (one that has only been glossed by critics to date), as well as giving the novel a framework upon which to support the characters.

With the character of Sibyl thus assuming larger

proportions, it is easy to see how Grove's own development as an artist has reached a maturity both of style and theme. Although his landscape is still a highly unnatural one, it has become one that is full of many more contours than were to be found in his earlier prairie works. His characters then were more pasteboard cutouts than believable individuals and the conflicts he presented were more often narrow and crooked, in spite of his obvious attempts to make them universal.

One incident which illustrates how complete Grove's conceptual landscape has become, is that which has to do with Sibyl Carter's public humiliation. Following her attempted seduction of Samuel Clark, a rumour became rife in the town to the effect that Sibyl had become his mistress. In recounting this rumour to Lady Clark, Odette Charlebois exclaimed that ". . . it was preposterous. But the men believed it." (MM, 152) Sibyl was unaware of the reaction of the townspeople to her ostentatious behavior.

". . . Sibyl Carter had never spoken to anyone not in her set except in the tone of command. She had indulged in an ostentation of wealth beyond even her ample means; she had gone past the mill on her saddle mounts, a groom following behind; she had treated the town, with the exception of those frequenting this house, as though it did not exist -- except, of course, where her sexual greed was concerned; at last, it seemed, she had 'vamped' the boss." (MM, 154)

Her provocative attitude became more pronounced during her divorce trial. And when finally she returned to Langholm,

"Sibyl's attitude was not calculated to regain lost ground for her. Looking down on the staring salesgirls and clerks who crowded the sidewalks, she ostentatiously remarked upon them; and her maid burst out laughing." (MM, 152)

That night, as Sibyl prepared to drive into town to board the train, she was attacked by a crowd of women who pulled her out of her carriage and pushed into the middle of the road where she was told, "Run, if you want to catch that train. Run, you bitch, run!" (MM, 160) Sibyl is chased by the "silent but fiendish" (MM, 160) crowd of irate women, who clutch at her clothes, pulling and tearing them off piece by piece until, "coming into the direct light, she ran naked, save for her corset." (MM, 181) There follows a wild carriage ride through the main street of Langholm, in full view of all the inhabitants, who release their hostility in a glorious burst of hilarious laughter. Sibyl finally manages to board her train and that is the last time that we ever see her.

This public exercise in humiliation is interesting not only because it is a unique method for an author to employ in serving one of his characters his just reward, but also because in this particular case it underscores what Grove has been trying to achieve in the whole character of Mrs. Carter. She has been as a blight upon the public scene, a breaker of accepted conventions. It is only fitting that these very people, the men included, should be the

instruments of her punishment. The sociological overtones of this act of atonement are many, and even J.G. Frazer in The Golden Bough cites a similar incident in a tribal society. Individuals guilty of sexual aberrations must . . . atone for their sin by dancing naked before the king and an assembly of the people, who throw hot gravel and bits of glass at the pair.⁸

This particular incident only serves to accelerate the animosity of the towns-people towards the Clarks. Unrest in the town becomes more salient every day and a strike at the Mill is purely a matter of time. When the strike comes and the slow process of decay begins, it is clear that although Sibyl did not actively cause the disputes, she had become to the men a symbol of the oppressive hand of wealth and control that dictated their very existence.

Sexual greed and moral depravity are punished in The Master of the Mill in a way unequalled in the rest of Grove's writing. But more than these things are punished for, in the end, sexual greed and its companions only betray an essential spiritual vacuum. The lack of a vision, in spite of its paradoxical overtones, is, for the author, a greater sin than carnal depravity. Sibyl is scalded for her lack of a vision. Maud Dolittle is pardoned because of hers.

The final result of such a dichotomous society is illustrated in the ways in which Grove deals with the

second generation. He is aware that these individuals do not grow up in a societal vacuum. The society and its machinery will affect the children in no small way. The next chapter will look at Grove's treatment of the future, and his own visions.

CHAPTER THREE: Daughters and the Second Generation

In the following discussion of daughters in the works of Frederick Philip Grove it will soon become apparent that the same considerations exist in this realm as existed in earlier discussions. Grove employs virtually the same techniques in developing the characters of these young girls as he did in the development of his more mature female characters. Only rarely do the characters speak for themselves, for example, with the exception of Alice Patterson, and they are, for the most part, seen through the eyes of other characters and those of the narrator.

In this case, however, the relative degrees of perception do not begin and end with an impression of character only. Any failure to perceive clearly an individual of a different generation may also be construed as a failure to perceive the generation itself clearly. Therefore Grove has dealt to his reader a two-fold problem -- of society, and of the individual -- to say nothing of the so-called "generation gap".

In addition to these aspects of examining the second generation women there is the added advantage of being able to observe this phenomenon from various points of view. The adult generation, characterized by Abe Spalding, Lady Clark, and Ralph Patterson see the younger people in one way. The narrator sees them in yet another and the young

themselves provide the third perspective.

In any interpretation of the second generation there is implicit a prophetic tone. It is easy to predict the ultimate tenor of a given culture by examining closely the behaviour of its young people as distinct from that of the adult generation. Insofar as the prairie is concerned, the basic consideration is the future of the rural life, as opposed to the urban. With this consideration goes the problem of continuance of the family under the cultural onslaught of urban life.

Grove attacks all of these very human problems and, in spite of their immensity, manages to convey a realistic picture of the problems that faced young and old alike in the frontier culture of western Canada.

For the purpose of this chapter I will deal primarily with two novels of somewhat disparate nature -- Fruits of the Earth, Frances and Marion Spalding, and Two Generations, Alice and Mary Patterson.

In Fruits of the Earth the two girls are not of much importance until they begin to mature, at about thirteen or fourteen years of age. Prior to that they are non-sexual creatures to be fed and cared for and little else. As they mature into separate entities, they begin to impinge upon the closed world of their parents to a greater degree, and are therefore dealt with in more detail. For more than one

half of Fruits of the Earth we hear about the girls as children only, and their influence is negligible. Following the death of his son, Abe Spalding begins to form a firmer bond between himself and his older girl, Marion. She is sent away to school and it is not until she returns that she becomes an independent force to be reckoned with.

Frances, the younger of the two girls, poses the first problems. Grove gives several descriptions of her.

[Frances] was only a little over fourteen, a very pretty girl, plump as Ruth had been, but with Abe's fine, light hair. She was prettiest when she was hot; her hair assumed a natural curliness, and her pallid complexion took on a rose tint. (FE, 151)

and again,

It was different with Frances. In spite of her plumpness she was pale and of delicate health; she suffered from headaches. Often she felt excessively tired; and that made her ill-humoured.

.
She was nearly sixteen. Physically she developed rapidly, though she remained small. Her face assumed a new and alluring prettiness, a plump and slightly anaemic charm, with fair curls hanging down in front of her ears. (FE, 179)

Little by little, in ever-increasing amounts, Grove continues to prepare the ground for the final actions of the novel that directly concern the two girls. The following description of Marion recalls to mind Grove's continued aversion to anything "citified".

[Marion] was standing in the far corner, diagonally opposite the kitchen door through which Abe entered. She was holding her hands behind her back, a smile on her lips.
It was the first time he saw her with her hair done up: beautiful hair, the dark brown of her mother's when young,

with golden tints in reflected light. Her face showed that bony, thin-fleshed grace which had been Charlie's. Her body, tall and slender -- the opposite of France's build -- yet fully developed, held a note new to him in attitude and expression. She wore a maroon-coloured dress of light silk, very plainly cut, too plainly for a girl of not quite sixteen: too well adapted to display the forms of a young woman. (FE, 151)

This strange creature is something new to Abe, he is shocked and almost frightened by her. She is a stranger in his house, illustrated most clearly when Abe asks her if she had passed her final examinations, and she replies:

"I think so, daddy." Which was said very readily, with a note of politeness foreign to ordinary intercourse in farmers' families. (FE, 151)

I am sure that Grove does not mean to convince us that the girls are corrupt or base, but time and again he includes, almost in spite of himself, short descriptive passages which in themselves are nothing, but when taken all together, indicate a smoldering unspoken thought.

Marion reclined, stitching a silky piece of lingerie -- her usual occupation when at home. (FE, 179)

Abe's growing sensitivity concerning the behavior of Frances seems at times forced and unrealistic. His thoughts become murky and his actions assume a furtive quality that hardly befit a man of his stature. A few small episodes will serve to illustrate this phenomenon.

Since Frances is of the younger generation and therefore one step removed from her father's world, and since she is also daily exposed to life in the city, it is

inevitable that she should accumulate mannerisms peculiar to that world. When she displays her "newfangledness", however, Abe over-reacts to her. Frances uses a few slang expressions and Abe launches into a heated dialogue with his wife about debased morality and lack of values. Abe has one ally in the person of Dr. Vanbruik. The Doctor also feels that the young girls are falling into an unhappy situation in the towns. It seems, during his expositions with Abe, that both the doctor and his companion are discussing a crowd gathering in the streets of Sodom, and each girl the original whore of Babylon. Although now a cliché, to Abe the phenomenon of young girls smoking and crinking, wearing strange clothes and speaking an argot entirely their own was deeply disturbing. He cannot be blamed for evaluating what he saw happening to the young, but he can be taken to task for seeing only that. As perhaps the most concise and at the same time most informative method of illustrating my point, the following is a letter written by one of the girls and intercepted by the Doctor,

"My dear Vi, -- Oh boy! I'm all tipsy and raring to go. Oh kid! Ma has relented. I'm going to attend a swell dance tomorrow night where the Tip Top Orchestra is playing. My togs are ready, compact filled, hair frizzed and all. Of course, Ma doesn't know; but Jack will be there with bells on. She thinks he's at Torquay yet. But this once I am going to have a fling. Dash it, though! I was mad at Jack the other day, a week ago. You know that nifty compact he gave me last Xmas? He smashed it; and I gave him Hail Columbia. He'll bring me a new one tomorrow night; that'll be jake with me. Didn't I feel punk though!

"Last night I met Agnes Strong on the ice. For the love of Pete! How that Jane carries on! I'd be ashamed of myself, honest to cats, I should. You know Frank Smith, the new sheik? He's sweet on me, and, of course, I encourage him. Want some fun. But Agnes is cuckooed about him since he took her to a dance last week. It makes me puke to see her. Well, so long kiddo. Must ring off. Think of me tomorrow night, all dolled up. Frank says I'm a spiff looker. Hug me tight. See you in the funnies! -- Pansy Blossom." (FE, 183)

To that the Doctor sagely observes that it is not "the moral degeneracy which it may or may not imply. It is the coarsening of a whole generation." (FE, 183) By thus pointing out the "coarsening" of a particular generation, Grove expiates his similar feelings about the generation of women that he finds around him. He sees the cities and towns as corrupting influences, as was evident in The Yoke of Life, and the country as a purgative, pure influence. I think this is due to a fact that is continually being overlooked in studies of Frederick Philip Grove -- that he is essentially a nineteenth-century novelist (he began the manuscript for Settlers of the Marsh in 1892) and not a twentieth-century writer. This would help to explain in part the often stultified sensibilities which he expresses. And it would also help to make more clear his aversion to the non-pastoral way of life, the way of life based upon a mercantile consciousness.

It is noteworthy that Frances is ultimately seduced by a locomotive engineer, in the moving locomotive. I do

not believe that Grove intended that we see the locomotive as a symbol of the machine, penetrating into the pastoral landscape, weakening and debasing the moral fibre of the young people in its path, but it is an interesting "coincidence".

There can be little doubt that Grove was very attached to his own small daughter, and that her death had a profound effect upon his life and career. At times, however, his tone becomes ironic when he turns to thoughts about children. In Over Prairie Trails⁹ he proclaims that Children are among the most effective means devised by Nature to delude us into living on. (OPT, 118)

Until the birth of his daughter, Grove had had little experience with children. His own childhood, though he was not an only child, was spent alone. Family life becomes an extension of those basic conflicts that exist in life generally. Domestic strife becomes a vehicle for Grove to examine his characters more deeply, and often the result is an artificiality of tone.

In Two Generations, written in 1939 and set in Ontario, Grove creates a close-knit family and into it projects both an idealized image of himself, as Phil Patterson, and of his own father, as Mr. Patterson Senior. Mrs. Patterson is herself described as "tall and stately, mother of the six children." (TG, 7) The novel concerns itself with

two major ideas, with the third springing from them. The conflict between the three sons and their domineering father forms the basis of the novel. The complex and insightful treatment of the relationship between Phil and Alice emerges as a thoughtful second theme, and ultimately the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Patterson comes under close scrutiny.

In comparison with Grove's conception of the consciousness of the second generation, Alice Patterson is atypical. Although published only five years prior to The Master of the Mill, and the character of Ruth Clark, Two Generations takes a benign look at the second generation, seeing there the seeds of hope and rationality for the future of the society. With the publication of Two Generations there is an acceleration in the clarity of Grove's perceptions. The characters in this novel emerge more as individuals than abstract conceptions, and are a prelude to the characters in The Master of the Mill.

Grove's way of intimating the hope inherent in youth is often to engage his young characters in a kind of Platonic dialogue which, though not irrelevant, often becomes too elevated to belong to provincial adolescents. It is Alice and Phil who continually banter in this way. Together they solve the problems of mankind and the Universe. Life in their eyes assumes an alluring tragic caste, forlorn

and melancholic. Alice is concerned about her future role as a woman, and her mother's complacent attitude of passive acceptance irritates her intensely. Not that Di Patterson is a bovine creature with no inspiration and no spirit, but only that she has come to terms with her own life and has banked her passionate youthful fires. Alice is convinced that her mother has become "part of the system" and is "full of conventions and inhibitions" (TG, 78). Alice is determined not to have to "make the best of it" where her life is concerned. There is a paradox in the character of Alice. On the one hand she is "fiercely selfish" (TG, 78) and on the other she believes that sacrifice is a woman's fulfilment. In her case she means that certain sacrifices will have to be made in order for her to be "free" -- free to be bound in her own chains, not those fashioned by anyone else.

It is interesting to note that the landscape in this novel is not one of despair but of promise. The land is yet a difficult opponent, but one that is ultimately more an ally than an enemy. The Ontario farmer reaps rewards for trust, unlike his prairie counterpart who finds only bitterness and poverty in return for his strength and dedication. Where the land seemed almost to rejoice in defeating its human invaders, the lush rolling hills of Ontario prosper under the proud and careful hands of its

dwellers. It is quite understandable then why Alice's future is one forged from a past of satisfying growth and maturity. Order seems to be in its proper form in Two Generations, while the world of the prairie farmer is like the Wife of Bath's "up-so-down" universe.

The novel's title, Two Generations would, at first glance, seem to imply the older generation and the younger, and in one sense, this is the subject of this novel. There is, however, another level of understanding. In Grove's eye there are two distinct younger generations, that one to which Alice and Phil Patterson belong, and another, represented by the young people of the town, and those who leave the farm for the "good time" in the town. Frances Spalding and Lydia Hausman would be good examples of the latter case.

It is fairly obvious in Grove's writing that he all but casts aside those followers after bright lights and powder and paint, and goes to great length to illustrate the pervasive decadence that the town produces. The town is the landscape of progress for Grove, and of a kind of progress that he would rather do without. For Grove, the landscape of urban Canada is all tinsel and chrome, cheap decorations vainly attempting to hide the essential depravity and vitiated nature of urban life. The urban landscape is both a projection of a "new morality" (which Grove feels

is only immorality with a new suit of clothes) and a powerful force in the corruption of mankind.

The other younger generation, epitomized by Alice Patterson, Len Sterner, and Ellen Amundsen, represent a preservation of tradition as well as a desire to seek a better world. They have a vision, like Grove, of a new age of Hope and Justice.

Alice Patterson expresses this hope to her mother, and although the words have something of a declarative ring, they nonetheless illustrate the point.

' . . . We're an outspoken generation. We are smashing taboos. We're iconoclasts, breakers of images . . . '

.
'We are rebels; we are scavengers; we want to clear away the rubbish of the ages.'

'To build up what?'

'A new world, freer, wider, cleaner, more sincere.' (TG, 186)

When Mrs. Patterson expresses her doubts as to the possibility of success of such a grandiose undertaking, and says that the world will remain the same in spite of her daughter's efforts, Alice replies,

'I don't believe it. Perhaps we are behind our age, mother; but perhaps we are also ahead of it. The boys and girls in town are after nothing but a good time. Their good times seem insipid to us. We want to feel that we are at least trying to move mountains: mountains of sloth and prejudice and resistance. Of course we'll fail. But we'll set people thinking, and perhaps even going, if at a snail's pace.
(TG, 186)

If this novel was indeed Grove's last, as he claims in In Search of Myself, then his vision of at least one-half

of the second generation was one of trust and not despair. Since The Master of the Mill did not reach the public until 1944, it would seem that his claim is not all it should be. He began the research for The Master of the Mill in 1928, and began the actual writing in 1934, then discontinued the attempt, seemingly at an impasse. Following the response to Two Generations, he re-drafted Mill and attempted to cut it down both in scope and actual physical length. It seems reasonable then that some characterization was altered during the many revisions, and this would account for the totally different vision of the second generation presented in this novel, as compared to that in Two Generations.

Ruth Clark, the daughter of the master of the mill, Samuel Clark, is the now almost stereotyped figure epitomizing post-World War I alienation. The generation of young people that Ruth represents are a modification of the "good time" people mentioned by Alice Patterson. Like Jay Gatsby's coterie, in Fitzgerald's novel, Ruth's generation is monied and independent. As far as the women are concerned, there is an emphatic manifestation of feminist "backlash".

The whole of the Ruth Clark "episode" in The Master of the Mill is set off from the mainstream of the narrative. It seems as if Grove found in her an opportunity to explore this very peculiar type of woman. There is a perceptible

pause in the stream of the novel while the narrator makes a wide digression, both in time and theme, to encompass fully the phenomenon of Miss Clark.

. We are told that Ruth affected the post-war attitudes of defeatism and cynicism, and that she refused to accept age-hallowed standards. The latter is similar in kind to Alice's refusal to accept the older generation's methods, but in her case that refusal did not result in cynicism. Like Jordan Baker, Ruth's mental attitude was one of "utter boredom" (MM, 204). More important to the entire consideration of women was Ruth's denial of her feminine sexuality:

. . . she adopted that lounging, slouching carriage, flat-breasted and curved in the spine, with a masculine affectation of speech. (MM, 204)

We have seen this kind of anti-sexuality before in the character of Ellen in Settlers of the Marsh, but in Ellen hers was a fear-based reaction, based upon a childhood experience, whereas Ruth is said by the narrator to be "without sex." (MM, 204)

In addition, there is a suggestion at the close of Settlers that some kind of sexual resolution is imminent between Ellen and Niels. There is no such suggestion in Ruth's case. To be sure, it is carefully pointed out by the narrator that her eccentricities were mere camouflage to cover an essential lack of sexuality, but there is no hint that she is inhibiting her sexual drives. If anything,

there is the suggestion that physical desire, interpreted by her as lust, is repellent to her. Repellent not so much because of its own nature, but because to accept the fact of sexual desire would be to accept the fact of womanhood, and this Ruth is unwilling to do.

Grove produces two examples of this quality in Ruth, the first is the fact of her marriage to the "ancient marquis" (MM, 204). Miss Charlebois describes the match.

It was Ruth who proposed to him. She simply bribed him into consenting. She settled half a million francs annually on him and promised to keep up the estate for the sons. (MM, 205)

For Ruth, it was purely a commercial transaction, a pact which mainly kept up appearances and was of mutual benefit. The narrator goes on to assure us that the marriage was never consummated. This may seem like a pandering to one's own fears and deficiencies, but for Ruth it was the ideal arrangement. The second illuminating affair concerned Ruth and a would-be lover, Magnus Wright. He tried to persuade Ruth to run away with him, and during the ensuing automobile drive she took a sudden dislike to his "lecherous jaw quivering under his blond beard . . ." (MM, 212). Ruth ultimately leaves this gentleman stranded by the side of the road, and she returns to town.

Grove conjures a vision of Ruth very dexterously by means of several perspectives. In each of the anecdotes

which he relates that concern this young woman there is a different perspective used. In the recounting of her married life, we see Ruth through the eyes of Odette Charlebois, the principal narrator. We see obliquely through the eyes of the thwarted lover another, though related side of her character. In another scene, we see her as the people of the town of Langholm must have seen her. Being one of the local aristocracy, Ruth Clark was sure to be an object of interest whenever she happened to make a public appearance. She also seemed to make a point of appearing at just that time when there would likely be a great number of people in the vicinity. On one such occasion she parked her car on the main street, alighted, and

for a moment stood, looking about at them all; and then she laughed. She took a case from her purse and lighted a cigarette; and thus, still betraying agitation, by the speed and quality of her movements, she raised one foot to the running board of the car, leaned an elbow on her knee, and began to talk as if we were alone in the world, every now and then flicking her ashes to the ground, and staring at every passer-by . . . (MM, 206).

This affectation of masculine nonchalance is the hallmark of Ruth's character. She is all alone in the world, and it is the wrong world for her. Oppressed by her wealth, and without direction in life, she chooses to maximize each situation into a "vignette". It is almost as if she is daring the world to fight back, to retaliate in some way

against her individuality. Her rough, anti-feminine approach to the outside world is another way of denying what she essentially is, and also is an attempt to discover what she is. By her elaborate disguise, she is trying to find the role that is uniquely hers. She is unable to find such a role and finally her repudiation of society begins to fail her as a mask and she breaks down. In a rare display of emotion, Ruth breaks down before Miss Charlebois and asks for her help to get away,

"'Where?' I asked.

"'Anywhere. To Europe, Africa, China.'

"'What for, child?'

"'To get away from myself.' (MM, 213)

This is one side of Ruth's reaction, to escape her own awareness of herself. The other side of this reaction is to destroy and therefore remove for all time the threat of the world.

"After a pause she got up. 'If I were a man I'd know what to do.'

"'And what is that?'

"'I'd make a bomb big enough to blast such abominations as this town into nothingness.' (MM, 214)

This last has the mixed flavour of Lear-like impotence and temperamental adolescence, a final curse at the world that is at once loved and hated.

This has been a narrative pause, as was pointed out earlier, and from here on until the final scenes of the novel, we never hear of Ruth again, except in foggy

murmurings from the Senator's memories.

Because of its parenthetical position in the novel, I suspect that the Ruth Clark episodes would have been one of the things that Grove himself saw as faulty in The Master of the Mill. He felt that he had given minor characters much more narrative space than they deserved, and that, as a result, the novel became overcrowded with insignificant characters. This is true as far as structure is concerned, but in the case of Ruth Clark it must be justified by the very pertinent nature of the characters. It is true that, aside from contributing in a minor way to the growing unrest in Langholm and the distinction between classes, Ruth adds little to the body of the novel. It might also be argued successfully that her character was one that might have been expanded because it is central to an understanding of the context in which Grove set his characters.

Of all the women that we have seen in Grove's novels, Ruth Clark emerges in strong relief, in spite, or perhaps because, of the scanty portrait that we have of her. As the image of the "other generation", opposed to Alice Patterson's generation, and the "good time" youngsters of the lower and middle classes, Ruth presents us with a capsule view of Grove's vision of the future.

It is well for Grove that he recognized and focussed

upon this very real aspect of youth. The lack of a personal vision, where so many of his previous characters were possessed by one, is an important concept for Grove to see in his society. Perhaps there is a clue in the closing lines of The Master of the Mill. Maud Dolittle observes that she has come to place a great deal of confidence in the capacity of the collective human mind. Rather than the importance of the individual dream or vision, Grove may have come to see the future of the race in the pooling of these visions, into one that is more wholesome and more tenable.

CONCLUSION

The majority of criticism of the past concerning the writings of Frederick Philip Grove have at least one outstanding feature -- they all have about them the air of an apology. Desmond Pacey refers to The Master of the Mill as "an interesting experiment"¹, and The Yoke of Life is for him "a good book; but it is not a great one."² Another critic, M.G. Parks, announces in his introduction to Fruits of the Earth that

[Grove's] penetration into the human personality is seldom deep, and the reason is undoubtedly, . . . that Grove's rather self-centredness severely limited his sympathetic understanding of other people, real or fictional. (FE, xii)

In point of fact, there is evidenced in the criticism to date an attitude of tolerance to Grove's works. This tolerance usually assumes the form of an emphasis on Grove's Canadianism rather than on his writing. For the most part, critics are unwilling to discuss Grove in any context except that of impressionism. There have been few published attempts to examine Grove's literature per se and therefore the majority of critical essays take the form of reviews.

It is for these reasons that this thesis has attempted to particularize the literature, by examining it from a particular point of view. Frederick Philip Grove has given to Canadian letters something more than a record of purely physical landscapes. He has value as more than merely an

"eye" to testify to the quality of life on the Canadian prairies five decades ago. To limit his contribution to those areas only would be to do him a disservice, as well as to indicate the superficiality of the reader's awareness. Desmond Pacey would have us believe that Grove's only talent lay in "the patient accuracy and intelligence with which he records and interprets the processes of ordinary life,"³ and he places little emphasis on the author's imaginative powers. But if we are able to free ourselves from the myopia of the Canadian mystique and see for a moment beyond the hills and wild summer storms, it is possible that we will find there lies within the novels of Grove a landscape of the imagination yet untouched.

Through an examination of the women in Grove's works we find aspects of his artistic imagination not strictly limited to geographical description. In the prairie works the women serve as complements and foils to the actions of the men. They provide alternative perspectives from which to view both the physical and psychological landscape. It has been pointed out that the creation of the prairie women takes place indirectly in the narrative sense, and that usually they have no psychological reality of their own. Ruth Spalding is seen as a corollary to her husband Abe, a projection that is both a part of and apart from his own. Ruth stands as a metaphor for the passage of time,

and the ultimate nemesis of her empire-builder husband. Her physical grossness she carries like the burden of the material world, the world of her husband.

In Fruits of the Earth and The Master of the Mill the themes are not so much particular as they are cosmic. The conflicts in the Spalding empire and in the Clark empire are not restricted to those individuals alone. What Grove saw and recorded should not be viewed as only "prairie life", or "city life", but as microcosmic replicas of more universal conflicts. To do less than this is to reduce his writing to mediocre melodrama.

The studies of differences in generations in The Yoke of Life and Two Generations are studies of contemporary phenomena and Alice Patterson and Lydia Hausman are windows onto those phenomena. Grove has often been compared to Dreiser, and like Dreiser he is not only telling a tale of one man, but interpreting and examining the entire spectrum of a generation. The three Mauds in The Master of the Mill do more than fill out the plot of the novel. Each in her own way is an exemplum of a quality of human life, and a unique pair of eyes with which to see the quality of life of others. Sibyl Carter and Ruth Clark are figures of a new morality, and a new generation. They bring to light alternative aspects to the conflict of existence.

I have mentioned earlier in the thesis that it would

be indeed unrealistic to discuss the women only. It was precisely in the relationships between men and women that Grove found ample information for his explications. He characterized the conflict between the desire for existence and the hostility of Nature by means of the men and women themselves. Their conflicts in a smaller way echo the conflicts of the Universe, and at the same time are closely linked to that larger conflict.

It is the concern of this thesis that the opinion of Grove the unimaginative recorder should give way to an opinion which includes more of Grove's attributes. It is damning with faint praise to illustrate how well Grove could describe a gathering storm or a field of stooked wheat. It is gratuitous lip-service to speak of his keen eye for physical detail and then say nothing about his ability to characterize or dramatize.

For sheer psychological depth alone, Settlers of the Marsh stands as one of the few great novels produced on the Canadian prairie. Ronald Sutherland calls it "Frederick Philip Grove's finest achievement"⁴ and bases his high estimation, not on physical description alone, but on "effective characterization and felicitous technique".⁵ The characterization of Ellen is in itself a masterpiece when it is considered that she has very little narrative devoted to her.

The two major considerations in the works of Grove that have been examined in this thesis are: the vision, and the quest. These two motifs are necessarily closely allied, the quest following the vision. The curious aspect of these phenomena is that the quest becomes a diabolical one, rather than a search for enlightenment as we might expect. Furthermore, the qualities of the vision are personified in the character of a woman. In Settlers of the Marsh for example, there are two distinct visions -- the good, and the evil -- and each has its corresponding female character -- Ellen and Clara. The diabolical vision eclipses the vision of good, as Clara impinges more and more directly on the consciousness of Niels Lindstedt. It would seem that the author is attempting to illustrate the conflict in an individual between good and evil. But the novel ends with a notable lack of a vision of any kind. Niels and Ellen are re-united, but in the plane of reality and not vision. Throughout Settlers of the Marsh the misconceptions, and flawed perceptions of those influenced by a vision is consistently emphasized. The same observation holds true for The Yoke of Life wherein the static vision of purity becomes inverted to such a degree that it too becomes diabolical. The final scenes between Len and Lydia only serve to emphasize this point. In Grove's final novel, The Master of the Mill, the mill itself is the vision. It

is the provider both of food, existence, and ultimately, in the eyes of Samuel Clark is a creator of social justice. But the mill as vision fails, almost seeming to turn upon its creators and servants in an attempt to devour them.

Ultimately then, Grove is essentially explicating the paradox of human existence: Man must place visions before him and strive to fulfill them, but he must fail because of the very nature of the vision itself. The women are destroyed because they become involved in the visions of the men and fail to escape before it is too late. All the women except Ellen Amundsen and Maud Dolittle who are nonetheless scarred because of their close association with visions.

The reason for the failure of the vision lies in the nature of that most capricious mistress of them all -- the land itself. As Henry Kreisel notes

The earth is at once a willing and unwilling mistress, accepting and rejecting her seducer, the cause of his frustration and fulfilment, and either way the shaper and controller of his mind, exacting servitude.⁶

and it is precisely this mistress who gives meaning to the existence of the character like Niels Lindstedt.

All the works of Grove have not been examined in this thesis. The emphasis is placed on those psychological works in which the author demonstrates his knowledge of the intricacies of the human psyche, and his ability to communicate them to his audience.

Grove himself, in the almost bitter, time-weary style of his late middle age, serves us the best possible conclusion.

And so we come back to this: either our day has been, or our day will come; we only know that; in our aim, we are not of this day of false fronts and shoddy. But we also know that, if our lives and works are to be of any value whatsoever (and we sometimes doubt it), they will be so precisely on that account.

-- from "Apologia pro Vita et Opere Suo".

FOOTNOTES

Introduction and Chapter One

¹F.P. Grove, In Search of Myself. Toronto: MacMillan, 1946. All subsequent references will be from this edition and will take the form (ISM, and page number).

²F.P. Grove, Settlers of the Marsh. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1925. All subsequent references will be from this edition and will take the form (SM, and page number).

³F.P. Grove, Fruits of the Earth. Introduction by M.G. Parks. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965. All subsequent references will be from this edition and will take the form (FE, and page number).

⁴F.P. Grove, Our Daily Bread. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1928. All subsequent references will be from this edition and will take the form (ODB, and page number).

⁵F.P. Grove, The Master of the Mill. Introduction by R.E. Watters. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961. All subsequent references will be from this edition and will take the form (MM, and page number).

⁶F.P. Grove, Two Generations. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, January, 1939. All subsequent references will be from this edition and will take the form (TG, and page number).

Chapter Two

⁷F.P. Grove, The Yoke of Life. New York: Richard R. Smith Inc., 1930. All subsequent references will be from this edition and will take the form (YL, and page number).

⁸J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough. Abr. ed. New York: MacMillan, 1963.

⁹F.P. Grove, Over Prairie Trails. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965. All subsequent references will be from this edition and will take the form (OPT, and page number).

Conclusion

¹D. Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove. Toronto:
The Ryerson Press, 1945, 90.

²Ibid., 64.

³Ibid., 56.

⁴R. Sutherland, Frederick Philip Grove. Toronto:
McClelland and Stewart, 1969, 51.

⁵Ibid., 51.

⁶Henry Kreisel, "The Prairie: A state of Mind",
Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada. Fourth Series, .
Volume VI, Section II, 1968.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCESWorks Cited

- Grove, F.P. "Apologia pro Vita et Opere Sua", Canadian Forum, XI (August, 1931), 420-422.
- . Fruits of the Earth. Introduction by M.G. Parks. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965.
- . In Search of Myself. Toronto: MacMillan, 1946.
- . The Master of the Mill. Introduction by R.E. Watters. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961.
- . Our Daily Bread. Toronto: MacMillan, 1928.
- . Over Prairie Trails. Introduction by Malcolm Ross. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961.
- . A Search for America. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1939.
- . Settlers of the Marsh. Toronto: Ryerson Press 1925.
- . Two Generations. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1939.
- . The Yoke of Life. Toronto: MacMillan, January, 1930.

Others

- Grove, F.P. Consider Her Ways. Toronto: MacMillan, 1946.
- . It Needs to be Said. Toronto: MacMillan, 1929.
- . "Lazybones", Queen's Quarterly. LI (Summer, 1944), 162-173.
- . "Morality in the Forsyte Saga", University of Toronto Quarterly. XV (October, 1945), 54-64.
- . "A Postscript to 'A Search for America'", Queen's Quarterly, XLIX (Autumn, 1949), 197-213.
- . "A Prelude to 'In Search of Myself'", University of Toronto Quarterly, X (October, 1940), 60-67.

_____. "Snow", Queen's Quarterly, XXXIX (February, 1932)
99-110.

_____. The Turn of the Year. Toronto: MacMillan, 1929.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Works Cited

Frazer, J.G. The Golden Bough. Abr.ed. New York: MacMillan, 1963.

Kreisel, H. "The Prairie: A State of Mind", Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada. Fourth Series, Volume VI, Section II, 1968.

Pacey, Desmond. Frederick Philip Grove. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1945.

Parks, M.G. Introduction to Fruits of the Earth. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965.

Sutherland, R. Frederick Philip Grove. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969.

Others

Dewar, J.A. "The Master of the Mill: a Review", Canadian Forum, XXIV (March, 1945), 290.

Eaton, C.E. "The Life and Works of Frederick Philip Grove", Unpublished Master's Thesis, Acadia University, 1940.

Ferguson, M. "Frederick Philip Grove", Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1947.

Grant, G.M. "Frederick Philip Grove", Unpublished Master's Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1946.

McCourt, Ed. Music at the Close. Introduction by Allan Bevan. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966.

McLoed, G.D. "Frederick Philip Grove", Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1966. Microfilm: Public Archives of Canada.

Mitchell, W.O. Who Has Seen the Wind. Toronto: MacMillan, 1947.

- Moodie, S. Roughing it in the Bush. Introduction by Carl F. Klinck. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962.
- Myles, E.L. "The Self as Theme in Grove's Novels", Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Alberta, 1965.
- Ostenso, Martha. Wild Geese. Introduction by Carlyle King. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967.
- Pacey, Desmond. Creative Writing in Canada. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1967.
- Rhodenizer, V.B. "Consider Her Ways: a Review", Dalhousie Review, XXVII (April, 1947), 116-117.
- Ross, Sinclair. As For Me and My House. Introduction by Roy Daniells. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967.
- Sandwell, B.K. "In Search of Myself: a Review", University of Toronto Quarterly, XVI (January, 1946), 202-206.
- Stanley, Carleton. "The Master of the Mill: a Review", Dalhousie Review, XXV (July, 1945), 173-181.
- Stegner, Wallace. Wolf Willow. New York: The Viking Press, 1966.
- Sutherland, R. "Twin Solitudes", Canadian Literature, XXXI (Winter, 1967), 5-24.
- Tallman, Warren. "Wolf in the Snow: Part I", Canadian Literature, V (Summer, 1960), 7-20.
- _____. "Wolf in the Snow: Part II", Canadian Literature, VI (Autumn, 1960), 41-48.

B29926